

ANGEL IGLESIAS ORTIZ

Exploring Social Objectivity through Hegemony, Antagonism and Heterogeneity

Outlining a Conceptual Approximation

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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Ángel

ABSTRACT

The general objective of this dissertation is to outline a conceptual *approximation* that links Peace and Conflict Research with a poststructuralist theorising and analysis of discourse and identity. The argument is that this theoretical perspective is very limited and not fully acknowledged in this field of studies. Thus, understanding approximation as the ‘act of coming near’, the objective is particularly developed by proposing different *points of reference* that put forward this perspective to the conceptual resources in Peace and Conflict Research. The approximation is developed with the aim to open different theoretical and analytical angles to comprehend the political dimension behind the discursive and visual references that construct discourses and identities.

The points of reference develop through an ontological-theoretical-analytical framework. The first point includes a post-foundational understanding of the social. This understanding considers the multiple and contingent foundations constituting the social and the political dimension behind this. The second point includes an analytical context based on the perspective developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, known as *discourse theory*. Specifically, the analytical context is based on the contextualisation of discourse theory’s notions of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity as conceptual settings. The conceptual settings are the frame in which the analysis takes place and they exemplify different configurations of discourse and identity. This is what is regarded as *exploring social objectivity*. Finally, the third point displays different ‘poststructural strategies’ used in the analysis.

With reference to the analytical context, the first conceptual setting displays hegemony as a configuration that involves the conjunction of all-encompassing discourse and identities into a collective one. This contextualisation entails the creation of a configuration from a dispersion of elements trying to stabilise meaning in its own terms. The analytical reference in this first setting portrays the United Nations as a hegemonic actor uniting the world. In the second conceptual setting, antagonism works as a reference of a divided social field where two opposite elements try to achieve a dominant position in a given discourse. In this scenario the aim is to understand the composition of discourse and identity through binary oppositions and to consider the constitutive aspect of negativity. For this setting, the

analytical reference consists of the thematic representation of world peace in a bipolar antagonist context. Finally, in the last conceptual setting, heterogeneity is contextualised as a situation wherein a socio-political actor has been neglected or overlooked. The significant issue in this context is to follow the ways the actor articulates a discourse and identity from a disregarded position. The reference analysed is the Zapatista movement and their visions of the world from the local to the global level.

These three seemingly unrelated settings, along with the analysis of images and written sources, find common ground with the contextualisation that happens at the conceptual level. The articulation of images and quotations, that together form a mosaic of contingent identities and discourses, illustrate contrasting worldviews and show the different social configurations of discourse and identity as argued by discourse theory. Conceptually, the discussion develops considering discourse theory's concepts such as the logics of equivalence and difference, nodal points, empty and floating signifiers, myths, and social imaginaries. These concepts are analytically complemented with the notions of discursivity, deconstruction, textuality and intertextuality, politics of visual representation, and with particular proposals of Gillian Rose's visual methodologies.

The conceptual approximation provides insight into theoretical and analytical references based on poststructuralism with new lines, difficulties and openings in Peace and Conflict Research. Peace and conflict convey simultaneous contradictions and paradoxes that are necessarily mediated within words and images. This dissertation, thereby, intends to be a reminder of the dimension of power comprised by words and images in our everyday lives. The mosaic of contingent identities and discourses analysed in this work makes evident the need to think about the many foundations making the social and in the possibility of coexisting *peace(s)*.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän työn yleinen tavoite on tuoda käsitteellisesti yhteen diskurssin ja identiteetin jälkistrukturalismin teoreettinen näkökulma, sekä rauhan- ja konfliktintutkimuksen kenttä. Työn kontribuutio koostuu siitä, että tämä lähtäminen avaa erilaisia käsitteellisiä ja analyyttisiä näkökulmia niiden poliittisten ulottuvuuksien ymmärtämiseksi, jotka sijoittuvat diskursseja ja identiteettejä konstruoivien diskursiivisten ja visuaalisten referenssien taakse.

Vastatakseni tähän tavoitteeseen analysoin väitöskirjatutkimuksessani sosiaalisen todellisuuden järjestäytymistä (*social objectivity configuration*) kolmen viitepisteen kautta. Nämä viitepisteet sisältävät jälkifoundationalismin teorian, Ernesto Laclaun ja Chantal Mouffen työn eri elementtejä, sekä jälkistrukturalismin strategiat. Laclaun ja Mouffen teoreettinen näkökulma tunnetaan *diskurssiteoriana*.

Analyyttisen kontekstin avulla toteutettu pohdinta ja analyysi on konstruoitu erityisesti erilaisten sosiaalista todellisuutta koskevien selonteiden tarkastelua varten. Ensimmäisessä osassa kontekstualisoidaan hegemonia, antagonismi ja heterogeenisyys kuten *käsitteelliset asetukset* (conceptual settings). Näitä kolmea asetusta tarkastellaan mahdollisuuksina järjestää identiteettejä ja yhteiskunnallisia organisaatioita koskevia käsityksiä. Ehdottamani analyyttinen viitepiste on maailman diskursiivinen ja visuaalinen esittäminen erilaisten toimijoiden sosiaalista todellisuutta koskevissa selonteissa. Tällainen representaatio toimii analyyttisenä viitepisteenä, joka mahdollistaa kirjoitettujen lähteiden ottamisen tutkimusmateriaaliksi.

Työn analyyttinen tavoite on tarkastella, miten sosiaalista todellisuutta koskevat selonteot on konstruoitu diskursiivisesti erilaisten toimijoiden toimesta ja edellä mainittujen asetusten sisällä. Analyysin kriittinen ulottuvuus on kyseenalaistaa sekä merkityksen ja representaation välinen yhteismitallisuus, että tämän yhteismitallisuuden käyttö sosiaalista todellisuutta koskevien väitteiden rakentamisessa. Ensimmäisessä asetuksessa hegemonia kontekstualisoidaan tilanteena, joka tarkoittaa kaikkien diskurssien ja identiteettien yhdistämistä kollektiiviseksi kokonaisuudeksi. Hegemonia tarkoittaa hajanaisten elementtien järjestämistä sellaiseksi kokonaisuudeksi, joka pyrkii stabilisoimaan merkityksen sen

omilla ehdoilla. Analyyttisenä viitepisteenä toimii Yhdistyneet Kansakunnat, joka esitetään maailmaa yhdistävänä hegemonisena toimijana.

Tämän jälkeen antagonismi toimii jakautuneen sosiaalisen kentän viitepisteenä, jossa kaksi vastakkaista elementtiä pyrkivät saavuttamaan hallitsevan aseman tiettyssä diskurssissa. Tässä asetuksessa tavoitteena on ymmärtää diskurssin ja identiteetin järjestäytyminen binäärioppositioiden kautta ja selvittää negativiteetin konstitutiivinen aspekti. Tätä kontekstia varten analyttinen viitepiste koostuu maailmanrauhan temaattisesta esittämisestä bipolaarisessa ja antagonistisessa maailmassa. Viimeiseksi heterogeenisyys kontekstualisoidaan sellaisena asetuksessa, jossa sosiaalinen ja poliittinen toimija on suljettu ulkopuolelle. Tärkein tehtävä tässä kontekstissa on seurata niitä tapoja, joilla toimija artikuloi diskurssin ja identiteetin laiminlyödyistä asemastaan käsin. Analysoituna referenssinä toimii Zapatistinen liike, jonka maailmaa koskevia näkemyksiä tarkastellaan sekä lokaalilla että globaalilla tasolla.

Näiden käsitteiden kontekstualisoinnin yhteydessä harjoitettu pohdinta ja analysoidut tapaukset havainnollistavat eriäviä maailmankuvia sekä paljastavat erilaisia diskurssin ja identiteetin sosiaalisen järjestäytymisen tapoja, kuten diskurssiteoria on osoittanut. Pohdinta ja analyysi sisältää diskurssiteorian käsitteet, kuten yhtäläisyyden logiikka (*logic of equivalence*), erityisyyden logiikka (*logic of difference*), kiinnekohtat (*nodal points*), sekä tyhjä merkitsijä ja kelluva merkitsijä (*empty and floating signifiers*). Analyysissa käytetään jälkistrukturalismin käsitettä, kuten dekonstruktio, tekstualisuus ja intertekstualisuus, sekä Gillian Rosen visuaaliset metodologiat. Tämä väitöskirjatutkimus haluaa muistuttaa sanojen ja kuvien vaikutusvallasta jokapäiväiseen elämäämme. Sanojen ja kuvien mosaiikin analysointi esittää kuinka paljon paradokseja on rauhan ja konfliktin ymmärtämisessä.

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1 INTRODUCTION

To understand social reality, then, is not to understand what society is, but what prevents it from being

Ernesto Laclau

The analysis of the contingent character of the elements within the social requires the acknowledgement of the discursive dimension that constitutes and affects them. This ontological stance rejects an essentialist understanding of any element in the social. In light of this, this dissertation conceptually develops in reference to the tension between necessity and contingency. The discussion and analysis proposed in the following chapters comes about within the necessity to fixate meaning and the impossibility to achieve a final foundation of full intelligibility due to contingency (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 114).¹ In consequence, this idea requires the acknowledgement of the political, contextual and differential aspect that takes place in the constitution of discourse and identity. From this perspective, the social is understood as a system of differences in which the ‘natural’ relation between object and meaning is questioned. Thus, this stance considers that the centre, system or structure is incapable of fully determining itself and the elements that make it.

The argument grounding this dissertation is that in Peace and Conflict Research this ontological and theoretical positioning is very limited and not acknowledged. Consequently, the general objective of my work is to outline a conceptual approximation that links Peace and Conflict Research with a poststructuralist theorising and analysis of discourse and identity. The aim is to put forward this perspective in this field of studies. Understanding approximation as the “act of coming near or close”,² the aim is particularly developed by proposing different points of reference that can bring together this perspective as part of the conceptual resources in Peace and Conflict

¹ I use the second edition of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (HSS) 2001 (original in 1985). This is because the preface contains some self-reflections and evaluations from the authors.

² According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, ‘approximation’ is a noun of action related to the verb ‘approximate’ (from the Latin verb *approximō*). See: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/approximation>. Accessed: 23.01.19.

Research. The points proposed include post-foundational thinking; an analytical context based on three concepts developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, known as discourse theory³; and specific poststructural strategies for analysis. In fact, the analytical context⁴ is based on discourse theory's notions of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity. I propose to contextualise one aspect of these notions and consider them as conceptual settings. In these settings, I will address three examples with different configurations of discourse and identity in order to show the political dimension within the meaningful references that construct them. This analysis—or exploration of social objectivity—will show all the theoretical arguments and the explanatory depth of poststructuralist political theory.

In terms of a general overview of the perspective advocated, in social and political theorising, the poststructuralist argument on meaning and power starts with questioning the neutrality of language as a mean to understand social reality (Der Derian and Shapiro, 1989; Foucault, 1972; Howarth, 2000, 2013; Laclau and Mouffe, [1985] 2001). Considering contingency and the argument of absence and negativity, discourse appears as a way to organise meaning and forms of identification that is never entirely closed and is historically constructed. As a result, social reality, or social objectivity in discourse theory terms, is negotiated by the fixation of meaning and the articulation of discourse. Discourse theory, as a post-foundational perspective, pays attention to the moment of foundation because this is the moment when the limits of the elements are established through the fixation of meaning. Hence, this style of theorising contends that the fixation of meaning and constitution of identity is an act of power (Laclau, 1990: 31-3 and 60-1). The conceptual development is the recognition of the possibility that even a specific discourse can achieve a stable unity of meaning, though there is a gap preventing the closure and full realisation of these issues (Sayyid and Zac, 1998: 259). This 'gap' is where the conceptual approximation and exploration of this dissertation takes place. The political aspect that discourse theory stresses is the intervention that happens in the fixation of meaning. This, in my view, explains why the whole idea of the social is questioned. Therefore, the intervention in the fixation of meaning is the core issue of my analysis.

In this introductory chapter, my aim is to indicate the limited presence of poststructuralist theorisation and the analysis of discourse and identity in Peace and Conflict Research. In the next sections, I situate the most relevant works related to poststructuralist political theory and discourse theory. Afterwards, I will explain the

³ I will refer to discourse theory as a general notion of the work of Laclau and Mouffe and related scholars who follow this perspective.

⁴ This is presented in Chapter 5.

placement of this dissertation in this academic field and I will outline the intended contribution by explaining the three points of the conceptual approximation. In the explanation of the points, I give an account of the content of the conceptual settings based on hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity.

1.1 Conceptual deficit and absence

As academic discipline, Peace and Conflict Research is based on a multidimensional (Galtung, 1969) and transdisciplinary position (Alger, 2007: 299) that brings together a wide range of topics and approaches. Relying on these assumptions, I will point out the dissertation's placement in this field of study. I do not particularly deal with the main topics studied within the discipline (e.g. peacebuilding, mediation, education, conflict management, resolution and transformation, etc.) but note the specific limitations and lack of conceptual and analytical perspectives in this field. I contend that there is a 'deficit' of anti-essentialist and discursive perspectives in the current approaches of Peace and Conflict Research and that discourse theory's presence is exceptionally limited. This is the deficit that this dissertation addresses, and this can be also argued considering the limited number of works that operate under a 'poststructural logic'; I consider that there are analyses and studies that run in parallel to some basic logics related to this approach, but these remain undefined, or the conclusions are undertheorized. On the other hand, I do not claim the right to label the work of others or demand an open identification under this logic; overall, I draw attention to the issue that some basic poststructuralist tenets are theoretically underdevelopment and misrecognised.

However, there are important areas that can be conceptually developed by following post-foundational thinking and the poststructuralist theorisation of discourse and identity. This situation does not mean that poststructuralism has never been considered as a framework in this academic field. For instance, Oliver Richmond⁵ identifies the "fourth generation"⁶ of peace and conflict theory based on poststructural thinking (2010: 26-7). Nevertheless, according to Richmond, the works of this generation are focused on "governmentality" and biopolitics. This means that other thinkers or strands identified as poststructuralist are not used or acknowledged.

⁵ The work of this scholar represents an exception combining Peace and Conflict Studies and International Relations (IR).

⁶ Richmond's taxonomy is linked to IR and not 'officially' ascribed to Peace and Conflict Studies. See also: Richmond 2007.

The next examples illustrate the common limitations in the existing literature. Concerning the qualitative aspect, the lack of theorisation of identity formation is a common feature in the different books that I reviewed. Moreover, it is considered that in conflict resolution and peace mediation literature, the role of identity-related politics and the way identities are mobilised with meaningful references to past and historical issues is understudied and undertheorized (Lehti, 2016: 24-5). For instance, these conceptual limitations appear in the book *Peace, Conflict and Identity: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Research* (Hudson et al., 2009). The basic conceptual sense of ‘identity’ presented throughout the book completely overlooks some basic tenets of identity formation exposed by poststructuralism —namely, the relational character that constitutes identities, the notion of the constitutive outside (Mouffe, 1993) and the logics of difference and equivalence that explain identity formation in negative and contingent terms (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). The lack of this theoretical understanding hampers the analysis because certain social features (class, ethnic basis and political ideology) are considered as given and are prioritised over the complexities of contingent identities (Norval, 1996).

In the same line, when examining the content of relevant books such as *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Research* (Webel and Galtung, 2007) and *Peace Research: Theory and Practice* (Wallensteen, 2011), the conceptual frames used and the topics and approaches presented do not include any theorisation regarding the political dimension in the construction of discourse and identity. In my understanding, these two books represent what Richmond (2010) calls, to a great extent, the ‘second generation’ (conflict resolution) of peace and conflict theory. The first one includes a wide variety of topics arranged in four sections,⁷ but it lacks reference to the theorisation of the social referred before. For instance, the chapter ‘The language-games of peace’ is concerned with the possible uses and mistreatment of ‘peace’ as a term. The author asks, “When does sophistication become cynicism? When does use become abuse? And when does a worthy end become a tool in the hands of powers who are not necessarily in search of that end?” (Biletzki, 2007: 348). The analysis includes different fields in which peace is conceptualised, and this situation is referred to as ‘language-games of peace’. The author’s main criticisms target the ‘cynical convolution’ prompted by ‘postmodernity’,

On postmodernism’s heels we are now lambasted with the demand that we should recognize the relative worth of differing perceptions of peace, the contingency of our traditionally accepted struggles for peace, and the indeterminacy of any specific language of peace. (ibid.: 351).

⁷ These are: 1. Understanding and transforming conflict, 2. Creating peace, 3. Supporting peace. 4. Peace across the disciplines.

In the conclusion of the chapter, the author reaffirms the need for “certain ordinary meaning of ‘peace’” that can be found in different areas and at the same time rejects the ‘postmodern’ perspective because it fosters negative actions such as “the exploitation of contingency and relativism” (ibid.: 353). I consider that this line of argumentation overlooks some basic tenets of post-foundational political thinking (e.g. discourse theory) in that meaning is always relational, contingent and open to reinterpretation. In the case referred, the ‘identity of peace’ cannot be established a priori and expect a permanent normative commitment. This sort of essentialisation tends to subsume the political into a mere sub-region of the social (Laclau, 1990: 160). Thus, the theoretical and analytical concern is to address the way a hegemonic stance develops ‘peace’ in its conceptualisation and practice.

The second book mentioned above includes essays on the causes of war, conflict data, conflict diplomacy and non-violent sanctions, among other issues. Neither book considers the interpretative, hermeneutic approaches as valid options in this field. Contrary to the neglect of ‘postpositive’ alternatives, the analysis of social and political conflict based on the understanding of the relationality and contingent character of identities has demonstrated the complexities of collective identities and the fatal consequences of essentialising certain social features. In cases where ‘ethnicity’ has been framed as essential to the conflict, the construction of the identity has demonstrated the contingency and political dimension of identities (Campbell, 2007). The naturalisation of a discourse (“our peace and our national security”) occurs to justify a violent situation because —the other is essentialised as ‘something’ negative. This is a situation that many concepts of discourse theory and poststructuralist explanations about the social can address and in turn develop more critical venues in Peace and Conflict Research.

The absence of poststructural theorisation has a similar situation in academic works written in Spanish dealing with peace processes and conflict. The case of Colombia, as an example of one of the most representative armed conflicts in recent decades, shows that the majority of analyses are descriptive and only narrate the different stages and actors involved in the peace process (Valencia Agudelo, 2017: 208). In general, terms, the works in this geographical area tend to be isolated, lack interaction with wider academic trends or stay with single theoretical references (e.g. structural Marxism or dependence theory). There are only few works that discuss the ‘many identities’ that make the social (González Jiménez, 2004).

In two other examples exemplifying the ‘absence and presence’ of poststructural thinking, I found an anecdotal but revealing situation in the book *palgrave advances in peacebuilding* (Richmond, 2010). In this text, the term ‘poststructuralism’ appears three

times in the index; however, the only chapter that openly refers to poststructural thinking⁸ is not referenced in this part. The other book is *Hybrid Forms of Peace from Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism* (Richmond and Mitchell, 2012). In this text, the issue is that while positioning and explaining the wide and rich conceptual references and issues influencing hybrid forms of peace and everyday practices, the poststructuralist discursive dimension somehow fades. Considering the extensive range of issues presented and analysed in this book (ibid.:15. e.g. everyday social reality, everyday peasant resistance, democracy of everyday life, self-care and self-government in everyday life, among many others), the ‘everyday’ use of meaning, the enactment of identities and discursive articulations are lacking. Nonetheless, from the conceptual references mentioned in this book, the works referring to post-colonial theory, the aesthetic turn in International Relations (IR) (Bleiker, 2009), discourses of violence and everyday security (Jabri, 1996, 2007) and feminist theory in IR (Sylvester, 1994) can be linked to a wider poststructuralist agenda.⁹

1.2 Situating poststructuralism and peace and conflict research

The existing deficit means that it is possible to integrate more conceptual references in the Peace and Conflict Research agenda. My next objective is to map some works connecting this field of studies and poststructuralism. These works follow the critical engagement demanded for peace research (Patomäki, 2001; Richmond, 2007; Jutila, Pehkonen and Väyrynen, 2008). This engagement implies the questioning of power structures and their forms of legitimation. As previously mentioned, what is considered as the fourth generation of peace and conflict theory developed from Michel Foucault’s work. The main criticism advanced by the fourth generation towards the preceding ones¹⁰ concerns the universal pretension of peacebuilding through an institutionalisation of local practices promoted by ‘higher’ entities.

⁸ See: Väyrynen 2010.

⁹ On this concern, I distinguish that the work of David Campbell, Jenny Edkins, Vivienne Jabri, Michael Shapiro and Christine Sylvester can be considered as ‘poststructuralist’, but they are originally concerned with IR. Certainly, IR and Peace and Conflict Research share topics and ‘research agenda’.

¹⁰ The criticisms to the third generation target liberal peacebuilding, state building and the ‘emancipatory’ character of some works influenced by Jürgen Habermas.

If we consider the number of works originally grounded in Peace and Conflict Research related to poststructuralism¹¹, these are very limited. For instance, concerning gender and peacebuilding, poststructuralist feminism looks for the construction of femininities and masculinities in peacebuilding (Väyrynen, 2010: 141-2); this perspective overcomes the limitations that characterised essentialist and standpoint feminism. In this case, the poststructural stance challenges taken-for-granted knowledge on gender and peace building. For instance, in a situation of post-conflict peace and nation building, it is necessary to understand the gendered moments involved, including corporeal and symbolic elements (ibid.: 145). This case resembles the attention that discourse theory pays to the decisions made at the moment of foundation, the meaning invested to specific signifiers, and the resulting configuration via the logic of differences and equivalences.

In other contributions to the feminist peace research tradition, recent theoretical proposals point to a deconstructive way of reading corporeal relations of care/needs entangled in the actual biopolitical neoliberal matrix (Vaittinen, 2017). In 'poststructuralist terms', this work contributes to everyday peace by combining biopolitics and deconstruction and showing the complex entanglement of bodies and care in seemingly unconnected social and geographical places. This is a clear example of the possibilities of developing new openings in peace studies and poststructuralism. In this line of theorisation, the distinction between the political and politics serves as a decisive frame to reveal minuscule ruptures that occur through the mundane processes of everyday life constantly reshape a social order (Hoppania and Vaittinen, 2015: 76-7). In the same line of gender and conflicts, an anti-essentialist and performative theorisation of gender allows one to analyse the relation between wartime sexual violence, gender identity and social positioning (Féron, 2018). This conceptual stance shows different readings of the social hierarchies affecting the understanding of masculinity. These works demonstrate some of the possibilities that poststructuralism offers as a conceptual reference.

The diversity of poststructuralism is one of the assets that makes this perspective different (Finlayson and Valentine, 2002: 2). However, this diversity is very limited in peace and conflict, in that the only case I found that uses discourse theory's concepts is an analysis addressing the context of nationalist movements and conflict that explains the formation of identities and the inside/outside dichotomy. Following an anti-essentialist stance, the analysis shows the relation between antagonistic national movements, and national imaginaries in the conflicts related to Israeli-occupied

¹¹ It is important to underline that the majority of works that I found are from scholars linked to the Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI).

territories of Palestine and the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Bowman, 2007).¹² As seen, a general under-representation of poststructuralist thinking and the particular lack of a discursive approach are evident. This gap is the place where I try to contribute with the conceptual approximation.

Certainly, the ongoing stream of agonistic peace keeps close ties with poststructuralism and discourse theory. Chantal Mouffe's work (2000, 2005, 2013) is a central reference on this topic. The agonistic perspective conceptualises the possibilities of overcoming or taming antagonism but avoids the characteristic self-proclaimed positioning of dictating norms of social order (Mouffe, 2000). There is a multidisciplinary stance engaging with agonistic peace, which includes a postmodern perspective developed from IR (Shinko, 2008). Other works in Peace and Conflict Research include agency and agonism in peacebuilding (Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic, 2016); agonistic dialogue, radical disagreement and violent conflict (Ramsbotham, 2010); identities and conflict transformation (Lehti, 2016); and the politics of recognition, symbols and rituals (Nagle, 2014). In critical political geography, some authors have addressed the nexus of antagonism and agonistic peacebuilding (Aggestam, Cristiano and Strömbom, 2015). In contrast, agonism is questioned in relation to positive accounts of peace (Bregazzi and Jackson, 2016). All these works do not necessarily share the same conceptualisations of agonism, but they elaborate analyses on more open stances about the social. For instance, the postmodern perspective, based on a 'Foucauldian agonism', keeps open the necessary self-criticism of patronising others about what is peace or the best option to achieve it. In terms of analysis, this implies an appreciation of the complexities of identities engaged in conflicts that give room to agonistic relations (Shinko, 2008: 490). Similarly, novel readings on peacebuilding consider the nexus of antagonism-agonism in relation to the post-foundational distinction between the political and politics (Aggestam, Cristiano and Strömbom, 2015: 1737).

Both examples mentioned have clear links to the ontological and theoretical arguments that this dissertation examines. The development of the agonistic perspective, however, does not imply the subversion of this perspective with antagonism. The poststructuralist logic implies thinking beyond hierarchical dual settings of possibilities. In perspective, these analyses open new forms of understanding situations about identity and conflict. Specifically, they stress how the construction of identities reinforces and/or distends the conflict. In this dissertation, I do not directly engage in the discussion of radical democracy, agonistic politics or agonistic peace.

¹² This work was previously published in Panizza 2005.

However, there are common conceptual points that appear in this literature that require acknowledgement.

On the need for poststructural thinking in current social and political contexts¹³, Rosi Braidotti neatly observes that the return of “biological essentialism” is again supporting a reactionary discourse about nationalism built on cultural and ethnical essentialism. She urges a return to the philosophies of difference showing the progressive standpoint that these philosophies brought into consideration (2013a: 7). Braidotti’s argument echoes other calls that recognise the anti-authoritarian ethos that questions the authority of institutions, discourses and practices (Newman, 2007: 15). Poststructuralism offers a frame to follow the changing operations of power across the field of the social. Politics are not considered as confined to specific locations but instead appear through the social (Finlayson and Valentine, op.cit.: 14). In this sense, the rejection of foundations, as argued by poststructural thinking, opens new possibilities for critiques and actions of seemingly eternal structures. Current social movements considered as anti-globalisation can be seen as performing poststructuralist politics in action (Newman, 2005: 9).

1.3 Mapping poststructuralist political theory and discourse theory

In this section, I present an overview of the literature concerning poststructural political theorisation and discourse theory. After this revision, I will explain how this dissertation relates and contributes to this literature. To initiate a ‘conceptual approximation’, one must define some assumptions and notions that support this academic endeavour. I ground my working framework considering that there is a set of assumptions and considerations of what can be distinguished as a poststructuralist theory of discourse. The initial point consists of clarifying what ‘poststructural’ means in this dissertation. I follow David Howarth’s argument that this thinking implies a specific style of theorising informed by a distinctive set of ontological presuppositions (Howarth, 2013: 6 emphasis in original). I agree with Howarth (ibid.: 6-7. See also Braidotti (ed.), 2013; Dillet et al., 2013; Schrift, 2013) in that there is no systematic theorisation focusing on social and political issues resulting in a schematic and organised body of assumptions that can be named under this label. I consider that achieving an all-encompassing theory that reaches a ‘final explanation’ is contrary to what this perspective proposes. It is necessary

¹³ On the relation of politics and poststructuralism thinking, see: Peters, M, (2001), *Poststructuralism, Marxism and Neoliberalism: Between Theory and Politics*. Rowman and Littlefield.

to note that the ‘post’ does not completely reject all the assumptions of structuralist thinking (Lundy, 2013); rather, it points to the limitations of some notions that remained essentialist and proposes a different way of thinking to overcome this (Williams, 2005, Howarth, 2013:10).

In general, the work of Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault is regarded as the major source of what was named ‘poststructuralism’. This is because the work of these thinkers¹⁴ criticises different aspects of structuralist thinking (Schrift, 2013: 29). In this way, their criticisms ground diverse ‘strands’ of poststructuralism, sharing some assumptions but keeping points of disagreement. I consider that the common assumptions are the anti-essentialist stance at the ontological level, the impossibility of final grounds or the rejection of a full presence. On this last issue, for instance, there are divergent positions within poststructuralism on the question of representation and the constitutive features of difference and exclusion (Thomassen, 2017: 542). What is ‘different and/or excluded’ has been termed in these ways, “[P]oststructuralists have named it in various ways: difference and the virtual (Deleuze), *différance* (Derrida), lack and the real (Lacan), antagonism and heterogeneity (Laclau) and abundance (Connolly), among others” (ibid.: 543).

These ‘differences’ within poststructuralist thinking can be largely identified in three issues that are open for debate: immanence versus transcendence, abundance versus lack and autonomy versus hegemony (ibid.: 544). These three issues indicate the alignment of positions that take place because all issues are interrelated. The immanence/transcendence debate shows two ontologies that share the assumptions previously mentioned, but both stances develop in different directions (Biset, 2011; Biset and Farrán, 2011; Patton and Protevi, 2003; Smith, 2003). Each stance leads to different paths¹⁵ concerning difference as/and ontology. A ‘Deleuzian’ path of immanence considers difference as an abstract multiplicity with contingent and defined networks including issues of materiality, flows of energy, processes of becoming and experimenting modes of affirmation (Tønder and Thomassen, 2005: 6-7). The other alternative path is based on the idea that ‘lack’ is constitutive, and, therefore, something is always missing and incomplete. On this path, negativity and dislocation are central

¹⁴ These three thinkers did not consider themselves as ‘poststructuralists’. Certainly, there are more authors that can be considered as part of this thinking (e.g. Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva).

¹⁵ For example, Saul Newman identifies one position, Deleuze and Foucault, working with the idea of multiples and heterogeneous discourses and the other with Derrida and Lacan emphasising incompleteness of the structure (2005: 5). Additionally, these ‘paths’ may overlap and stand in tension but still maintain analytical viability. For instance, see Norval (2005) and Thomassen (2005) on this influence in Laclau’s work.

ideas to explain the constitution and interaction of elements (identities) and processes (subjectivity) (Daín, 2011; Marchart, 2007). This is the path in which I propose to explore social objectivity through the contextualisation of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity as conceptual settings.

On the ‘current status’ of poststructuralism, firstly, I take the books *After Poststructuralism Transitions and Transformations* (Braidotti (ed.), 2013), *The Edinburgh Companion to Poststructuralism* (Dillet et al., 2013) and *Poststructuralism and After: Structure, Subjectivity and Power* (Howarth, 2013) to illustrate the status. As seen, two of the titles include the word ‘after’. It refers to the current and future possibilities of applying this thinking to social and political theorisation rather than to overcome poststructuralism. Braidotti’s book is part of eight volumes on *The History of Continental Philosophy*. The ‘transitions and transformations’ considered in the book examine the relation between continental philosophy and issues of radical democracy¹⁶, postcolonial theory, feminism and religion, among others. Discourse theory is represented in the chapter on radical democracy. This chapter explains some of the contemporary developments of this perspective on democracy and the challenges ahead (Thomassen, 2013). The issues of abundance and lack are exemplified with specific positions on agonistic politics from Chantal Mouffe and William Connolly, respectively. The most relevant aspect of the chapter is that “poststructuralist radical democracy theory” provides the basis to ask how radical politics looks without foundation (ibid.: 184). This is clearly the post-foundational position that will be presented in Chapter 2.

The Edinburgh Companion is one of the most comprehensive efforts to present the main aspects, themes and influence of poststructuralism. However, radical democracy is neither mentioned in the chapter that reviews the trajectories and receptions of poststructuralism (Bowman, 2013) nor discussed in the conclusion (Dillet, Mackenzie and Porter, 2013) that addresses the contemporary alternatives to poststructuralism. This is a remarkable miss because some of these alternatives are critical¹⁷ to discourse theory. The positive aspect is that post-foundational thinking (Marchart, 2007) is considered as a renovated possibility that re-elaborates some of the central concerns of poststructural thinking (Bowman, op. cit.: 465-8). Even though the disconnection

¹⁶ This is the political project included in *HHS* and is supported through their works. However, I concentrate on the theoretical level of Laclau and Mouffe’s work. I will comment on some points of coincidence between the project and their conceptual work. This project includes Mouffe’s interests in agonistic politics and pluralist democracy and Laclau’s own definition of populism. For different positions on radical democracy, see: Tønder and Thomassen 2005.

¹⁷ The authors (Dillet, Mackenzie and Porter, 2013: 509) refer to ‘communism’ (critical to discourse theory with Badiou, Žižek and others), ‘anarchism or post-anarchism’ (Todd May, Saul Newman) and ‘post-secularism’ (Charles Taylor). Saul Newman’s work (2005, 2007) advocates a combination of poststructuralism and anarchism.

between radical democracy and post-foundational thinking¹⁸ is evident in these two books, the two perspectives share ontological and conceptual references that cannot be undermined. In fact, the work of Marchart is heavily influenced by Laclau's ontological arguments about the political and politics. In my dissertation, I refer to this ontological stance and use it as a foundation for the whole argument of my work. In the case of radical democracy¹⁹, I do not further engage with all its issues, but I mention its link to agonistic politics and peace.

David Howarth's book represents a major contribution to the 'poststructuralist project' in terms of grounding a 'living and growing' theoretical tradition that addresses social and political research. Howarth engages with major theoretical issues (structure, agency, power subjectivity) and addresses particular problems and their possible solution. To achieve this, Howarth takes and synthesises particular ideas of all major names²⁰ and elaborates "a distinctive version of poststructuralist theory" (2013: 7). According to this scholar, in modern social and political theory, two problems appear as central topics: the problem of social order and the matters of structure, agency and power. The abstract concerns with order include the emergence and reproduction of social regularities and norms, while the particular questions address the character of social and political order in contemporary societies (ibid.: 4). Both topics are related, and they are inherent to poststructuralism and discourse theory. It is worth mentioning that Howarth did not discuss Laclau's concept of heterogeneity and Marchart's work on post-foundational thought. Both of these issues are important references for this dissertation. Howarth's work (2000, 2005, 2013) represents a central reference of discourse theory and poststructuralism; hence, I will rely on some of his explanations and methodological suggestions.

Different books connected with poststructuralist thought have shown the possibilities of criticisms with this perspective. For instance, in Saul Newman's (2005, 2007) work, he highlights the potential of combining radical politics with anarchism and poststructuralism. In the books I previously mentioned, his analyses cover issues such as the politics of violence via discursive deconstruction, subjectivity, power and a post-

¹⁸ On this relation, Marchart explains that "[w]hile radical and plural democracy will always have to be post-foundational to some extent, the post-foundational horizon of our times is far from being radically democratic in any aprioristic sense" (2007: 176 fn.1).

¹⁹ This aspect is not considered in this research because I consider that it stands in its own conceptual dimension.

²⁰ Howarth works with four references: 1) Heidegger's existentialist critique of transcendental phenomenology, 2) Derrida's and Foucault's 'deconstructive genealogies' of closures in metaphysical texts and specific relations of domination throughout the social fabric, 3) Lacan's and Žižek's radical decentring of human subjectivity and 4) Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist theory of hegemony (2013: 7).

structural stance of universality. This last topic is particularly relevant for a discussion on the universal-particular²¹, as addressed by Laclau. In my understanding, Laclau and Mouffe's theory of hegemony exposes the complexities of the universal-particular debate.

On the 'practical application' of poststructuralism in specific topics, the analyses are developed through the study of politics operating in the social (Finlayson and Valentine, 2002). As I have commented in the previous pages, this perspective already demands a more elaborated stance on aspects such as the place of politics, the openness of the social and the discursive construction of subject and objects. Theorisation advanced by poststructuralism is based on the assumptions that agents or structures are not closed, self-determining or autonomous. It questions the way politics are defined and used in mainstream theories and addresses the diverse forms power in the social field (ibid.: 14-5). This presents a more complicated picture of how the social is constituted and requires a consideration of different explanations of the social, the political and politics (Edkins, 1999; Marchart, 2004). I consider that the discursive approach based on this perspective allows one to address significant questions about the grounds, unity and legitimacy of any social and political project. By avoiding pre-conceived roles or essences of the subject, analyses based on poststructural thinking offer an account of the political dimension of meaning and acts and show the contingent attempts to ground a definitive foundation.

In the light of this perspective, the next step is to present the literature linked to discourse theory. At first, I give a general overview of it. Different authors have explained and assessed discourse theory's main concepts (Gaonkar, 2012; Howarth, 1998, 2000; Smith, 1998; Torfing, 1999, 2005a; Torney and Townshend, 2006). The discursive strand related to poststructuralist theorisation is mainly associated with, or heavily influenced by, the work of Derrida, Foucault and Jacques Lacan. Then, the work²² of Laclau and Mouffe, and even Slavov Žižek (Torfing, 1999), becomes the reference of this style of theorising. In the case of discourse theory, it can be considered as a 'constitutive theory' because it offers a framework of concepts and logics attached to an ontological stance that together try to understand social phenomena. The constructionist character of discourse theory indicates that the practices and functioning

²¹ This will be discussed in Chapter 2 and considered in the analysis.

²² These three authors share some influences of Marxism, but Laclau and Mouffe accept the label of 'post-Marxism' for their work (2001: ix). I present their explanation on page 49. This term refers to the revision and criticism of some central tenets of Marxism (e.g. primacy of economy, 'universal class') and, for instance, the re-elaboration of Althusser's use of the concept of *overdetermination* and Gramsci's conceptualisation of hegemony.

of discourse are social practices that shape our relation and understanding to the social world (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002.: 19).

Laclau and Mouffe's conceptual framework is based on three interrelated levels: as a social ontology, as a political identity theory, and as a project advocating "radical pluralist democratic politics" (Carpentier and Spinoy, 2008: 2-4, Smith, 1998). Within these levels, they place emphasis on the role of meaning in constituting social objectivity, the way this influences practices and structures, and the resulting interconnection through assemblages and formations (Howarth, 2013:22). As with any conceptual framework, discourse theory offers enlightening explanations, but it has limitations. I consider that the critical assessment made in the piece *Post-Marxism?*²³ (Geras, 1987) exemplifies what other authors (e.g. 'critical realists'²⁴, Boucher 2008; Townshend 2003, 2004) have misunderstood or rejected not only about discourse theory but also about 'postmodern or poststructural thinking'. A related criticism is the 'interpretative approach' (e.g. on political science) that is deemed as "incapable of producing objective knowledge" (Bevir and Rhodes, 2005). The common argument against discourse theory and poststructuralism is that they are idealist perspectives and thus the practices and 'materiality of the world' are passed over. These perspectives have routinely been accused of reducing reality to thought or to text and discourse (Howarth, 2013: 70). Laclau and Mouffe's response to these criticisms is that their argument is mistaken "[...] between the being (esse) of an object, which is historical and changing, and the entity (ens) of what the object is not" (1987: 103). On this issue, it is necessary to understand that there are two distinct orders at stake: discursive being and extra-discursive existence (Glynos and Stavrakakis, 2004: 204).

Hence, the constitution of meaningful objects outside their discursive characterisation is ruled out. A related criticism is the relativism conveyed by the argument that there are no 'final foundations'. This criticism considers that all values or principles have the same validity. The post-foundational aspect does not imply this per se; it is, firstly, wrong to conclude that every position is equally valid (Torfing, 2005b: 165-6). For instance, there are institutions or structures that establish norms or values for validity. The poststructural analyses highlight that the specific order dictating the norms or values is a constructed entity that will face change and challenges (e.g. antagonist projects proposing other foundations). Therefore, the aim is on how the conditions of possibility of the foundation are constructed and legitimised.

²³ Geras made a negative review of *HSS*. Laclau and Mouffe had an extensive response to this. See: 'Post-Marxism without apologies' (1987).

²⁴ David Howarth (2013: 69-71) gives an account on the ontological and epistemological positions rejected by this perspective.

In the succeeding paragraphs, I give an account of the most noticeable works, areas and topics that have used discourse theory as a reference. This presentation intends to offer a general overview of the literature related to discourse theory; by no means is it a comprehensive review of such literature. There are many analyses in different field of studies that I do not include. However, I will highlight specific works and issues that are relevant to my analysis. In each analytical chapter (i.e. conceptual setting), I will comment on the works that are directly related to my analysis. First, I briefly mention the methodological aspect. One of the main criticisms of Laclau and Mouffe, or of discourse theory, is that there are no 'instructions' for how to use all of the proposed concepts. This 'methodological deficit' (Howarth, 2005: 316) has been addressed in different works (Glynos et al., 2009; Howarth, 2000, 2005, 2013; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; Nabers, 2015, Ch. 6; Åkerstrøm Andersen, 2003) that provide general guidelines and highly specific methodological arguments and instructions. The most recent example of this is the comprehensive proposal of a research program named 'Post-Foundational Discourse Analysis' (Marttila, 2015, 2016). In Chapter 4, I will explain the aspects proposed by these works and the ones that I consider as analytical guidelines. These are complemented by two of Gillian Rose's proposals on visual methodologies that factor into my analytical framework.

On the other hand, most of the studies²⁵ applying discourse theory undertake political analyses on the topics of hegemony, antagonism, collective identity, subjectivities and the articulation of discourses. For instance, discourse theory concepts can be combined with Lacanian theory, Derridean deconstruction or Foucauldian archaeology/genealogy (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 17). Overall, a wide range of analyses has been developed and explained through the conceptual framework of discourse theory (Howarth and Torfing, 2005; Laclau, 1994; Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis, 2000; Norval, 1996; Panizza, 2005). Other studies have focused on the internal struggles and permanent contestation that affect all discourses (Barros and Castagnola, 2000, on Peronism in Argentina); on the articulation of signifiers around one nodal point (Bastow, 2000, on neo-socialism in France in the 1920-30s, and 2002, on the National Front in France); and, on the formation of new discourses (Stavrakakis, 2000, on Green ideology, or Howarth, 2000a, on the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa). One central issue in all these analyses is on the processes that affect the formation and configuration of collective identities.

In the same line, the analysis of identity and social movements from a deconstructive perspective shows how appealing to essences can be a form of resistance but also how these essences tend to create inclusions and exclusions within the social field (Smith,

²⁵ I will refer to some of these studies in the analytical chapters.

1994, on Rastafari identity and discourse). In all the cases mentioned, the argument behind them is that identity is contingent, and their relational character must be considered at any historical conjuncture. Concerning local or national identities, these are articulated by and dependent on universal signifiers such as ‘state’, ‘nation’ and ‘Europe’ (Wæver, 2005). Similarly, the link to and importance of identity and foreign policy have been studied in relation to foreign intervention and armed conflicts (Hansen, 2006, on the Bosnian War) or international armed interventions (Nabers, 2015, on the “War on Terror”).

Populism was the last concern on Laclau’s academic oeuvre (2005). The relation between populism and the current situation of democratic organisation is also part of the agenda of this perspective (Panizza, 2005). The analyses on populism include the centrality of antagonism and the rise of specific socio-political movements (Mouffe, 2005b, on right-wing populism in Austria, or de Vos, 2005, on the same topic in Belgium). Central to these studies is the interrelation of internal and external elements considered as antagonist and how this relation takes place in the constitution of identities. Along the same lines, the political division in a national context has been studied through competing populisms in a situation conceptualised as bipolar hegemony (Palonen, 2009, on the current political circumstances in Hungary). This latter analysis has similar logics to the aspect of antagonism that I propose to study, in the sense that there is a divided field in which two sides are linked in a number of ways.

Continuing with the concern of hegemony, the analyses aim to explain the construction and failure of a political regime and the myths and social imaginaries involved (Norval, 1996, on apartheid); the attempts to hegemonise a field of study (Daly, 2002, on the constitution of political economy); the construction of hegemony and its relation to national identity and myths (Salecl, 1994, on the former Yugoslavia); or the construction of hegemonic positions at the international level (Herschinger, 2012, on the United Nations’ discourse on terrorism and the war on drugs). A fundamental aspect of the study of hegemony is to consider the further constitution and dissolution of imaginaries, (Çelik, 2000, on the Kemalist imaginary in Turkey), and the relation of such imaginary to social movements and the universal/particular distinction (Harvey and Halverson, 2000, on the women’s struggles in Chiapas, Mexico). In the case of my analytical context, hegemony is the main category that runs through the three conceptual settings as well as the concepts of myth and imaginaries. In the analysis of the settings, I will consider these both concepts because they are part of the horizon of intelligibility of any socio-political project; thus, they are closely related to the consolidation of hegemony (Norval, 1996: 4). It is also necessary to consider how myths

are disputed and grounded by two opposite sides linked by antagonism (Palonen, 2013, on myths and nationhood in Hungary).

Still on the subject of media studies, the book *Discourse Theory and Critical Media Politics* (Dahlberg and Phelan, 2011) also represents an opening for this perspective. The aim of this book is to establish a constructive link between discourse theory and media politics. The content of the book includes theoretical explorations of discourse theory and different thinkers and how they are reflected in critical media studies. I consider that one of the most relevant aspects of this book is that it addresses the concept of heterogeneity. This concept will be contextualised in one of the conceptual settings that I propose for analysis. Finally, the most recent theoretical contribution is the attempt to ground discourse theory in IR.²⁶ The book *A Poststructuralist Discourse Theory of Global Politics* (Nabers, 2015) features such an attempt. It is by pointing to crisis, in the social and in actual theoretical references in this academic field, that the ontological and theoretical body of poststructural thinking and discourse theory is articulated to establish a possible understanding of crisis and change. This is explained in these terms, “The nexus between the two terms (crisis and change) led to the introduction of a post-foundational, nonessentialist, discourse theoretical approach that rests on the notions of identity or sedimented practices, dislocation, antagonism, and institutionalization” (ibid.:129). An interesting part of this book is the analysis previously mentioned on the War on Terror and the US military invasion in Iraq. The analysis revised the institutionalisation of discourse and practices that legitimised the invasion and the use of myths for the articulation of identity and discourse in relation to the construction of a community. The study shows the justifications to demand national protection.

To conclude this section, it is necessary to consider that, for my dissertation, the most relevant point of all these studies is not exclusively the topics themselves but rather the way social objectivity is analysed through the ontological and theoretical arguments that characterise poststructuralism and discourse theory. As indicated in the above quote, a post-foundational ontology of the social shows the political dimension of this and sheds light on the complexities inherent to the fixation of meaning and difference. Ultimately, all the works that I have mentioned expose the contingencies of the social as well as the incomplete feature behind discourses and identity due to the role of the political. In my dissertation, I seek to illustrate these complexities through analysing three conceptual settings that can exemplify certain dynamics that appear in any case or situation related to issues of peace and conflict.

²⁶ It is also important to mention the ‘poststructuralist roots’ of this book through the work of Campbell (1992), Der Derian and Shapiro (1989), Edkins (1999) and Walker (1993).

1.4 Outlining the conceptual approximation

The conceptual approximation is grounded on my argument that in Peace and Conflict Research it is necessary to consider post-foundational thinking as an ontological reference and to apply poststructuralist theory of discourse and identity with different ‘strategies’ based on this perspective. Therefore, this dissertation will develop by showing these three points of reference that are deeply entangled. Each point entails a part of an ontological-theoretical-analytical framework. I contend that each point offers significant options to study existing trends of social and political conflict. My next concern, thus, is to draft this dissertation’s placement in this field of study and, at the same time, to explain the possibilities of these points of reference. I conclude this introduction with this dissertation’s intended contribution and the arrangement of the chapters.

1.4.1 Placement

Even with the limited presence of a general poststructuralist perspective in Peace and Conflict Research, and, more specifically, a lack of poststructuralist political theorisation of discourse and identity in this field, I consider that there are some constructive points for this dissertation’s placement and the proposed conceptual approximation.

For instance, one important point of placement is the book *Peace, Meaning, Politics and Strategies* (Forcey, 1989). It includes a range of perspectives²⁷ and demonstrates contrasting thoughts to analyse peace issues. In the introduction, Forcey considers that the politics of peace takes place in its conceptualisation. According to this author, the definition of peace implies a consideration of truth and reality. Whether it is defined as “philosophy, ideology or world views”, the conceptualisation of social reality is bounded to a political dimension (Forcey, 1989: 8). The same argument appears in Richmond’s *Critical Research Agendas for Peace: The Missing Link in the Study of International*. In this work, the author states the following,

It is assumed to be universal, and so apparent as not to require serious debate. However, not only is it important to understand the roots and conditions of conflict and peace, but it is also important to start with an understanding of the essentially political, and therefore subjective, nature of the act and project of defining peace. (2007:264).

²⁷ These include feminism, World-System theory, the historic approach, and rational theory, among others.

While neither of these statements was elaborated from an ontological or theoretical view that explains what constitutes the social or the political, the argument matches Laclau and Mouffe's stance on the political. This understanding presents new settings and an awareness of the power relations that pervade any account of order as well as the related practices and meanings. At another level, there is also a common ground from which to start. David Howarth argues that "interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity" are important principles of poststructuralist thinking (2013: 18). This perspective is in line with the multidisciplinary base regarding peace research, as considered by Johan Galtung (1964: 4). Concurrently, poststructuralism must be understood as a field without limits that overlaps with other fields (Thomassen, 2017: 541).

Finally, I find a definitive passage of placement for this dissertation. This is what Richmond calls the 'fourth generation' of theory and practice in peace research (2002, 2008). Even though this genealogical identification for peace and conflict theory is based on the IR, I can rely on it due to the theoretical content that is proposed. I quote at length to address the differences and content within the generations,

The first generation is derived from conflict management approaches that attempt to produce order without open violence by preserving the state and its relations. This reflects a realist view of peace. The second generation focuses on removing violence, structural violence and injustice, mainly for individuals. These combines elements of idealism, structuralism and liberalism. The third generation focuses on large-scale, multidimensional approaches to creating peace. This reflects the liberal peace ...and incorporates liberal-realism, structuralism, and claims it aspires to provide emancipation from conflict. The fourth generation seeks ways of dealing with conflict that would not result in its replication in various forms, leading to a consensual, legitimate and discursive form of emancipation (Richmond, 2008:99).

In brief, the fourth generation questions the implementation, influence and consequences of what constitutes 'liberal peace'. However, the theoretical strands that are considered in this generation do not form a homogeneous body of propositions even if some positions are shared. It is not my intention to make further and defined distinctions among these strands, but there are some points of contention that require elaboration. According to Richmond, there are 'critical and a poststructuralist' strands within the fourth generation. Both share the criticisms of a hegemonic top-down implementation of peace and highlight the importance of the local level. Still, there are points in contention between these two strands in relation to issues of governance and local agency, everyday peace, identity and some gender issues. Additionally, there are

even some ontological and normative differences that can be pointed out.²⁸ For instance, while considering the contributions of poststructuralist thinking to the topic of peace in IR, Richmond states the following, “While critical theory extends the well-known Enlightenment search for emancipatory peace, poststructuralism opens upon radically new possibilities for an ontology, or ontologies, of peace, for methodology, and towards and understanding of the relationship between knowledge and power” (2008: 134).

This statement includes two central issues: talking about *ontologies* (my emphasis) and considering the relationship between knowledge, meaning and power. Richmond mentions, pertinently, that “poststructuralism does not offer a theory, approach, or concept of peace” (ibid.: 135). Accordingly, he proposes “opening up multiple conceptualizations of peace” (2007: 247). Because of this, in another book, he revised the “poststructuralist agenda of ‘peaces’”²⁹ (2008: 135). In this agenda, the contribution of poststructuralist thinking can be seen in areas such as gender, identity, the subaltern, post-colonialism and Orientalism (ibid.: 148). Richmond does not directly refer to either post-foundational thinking or other ontological references, but it is clear that the argument is related to this ontological stance. In the next three sections, I introduce the points of reference to provide a general overview of them.³⁰

1.4.2 First point: post-foundational thinking: contingency and incompleteness

In this section, my aim is to set the first ‘layer’ of ontological explanations and to outline some specific assumptions that characterise post-foundational thinking. This stance is part of the ontological argument behind discourse theory and is, by extension, a part of this dissertation. As Jacques Derrida’s famously stated, “the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely outside a system of differences” ([1978]³¹ 2005: 354). This statement expresses what has been defined as post-foundational

²⁸ I refer to those claims regarded as universal (e.g. Habermas-inspired) but considered as a particularised universalism (Laclau, 1996a).

²⁹ This needs a clearer explanation. It does not imply any nihilistic dimension of ‘immoral relatedness’, as usually regarded by critics of any ‘post’ body of thought. I am referring to different ‘post’ stances: modernist, foundationalist or structuralist. For instance, various scholars have discussed the ‘normative deficit’ linked to discourse theory and poststructural thinking has been discussed (see for instance, Critchley, 1992, 2000; Devenney, 2000; Mouffe, 1996; Newman 2005, 2007).

³⁰ These points will be developed in the Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. In the following chapter, I give an account of post-foundationalism and discourse theory.

³¹ I use the electronic version translated by Alan Bass (2005).

thinking, which questions the possibility of establishing a final and stable foundation due to contingency (Marchart, 2007: 3-5). This sort of thinking emerged in the context of what has been called the “dissolution of the markers of certainty” (Lefort, 1988). My initial aim is to situate post-foundational thinking in relation to the existing theorisation of social and political issues. Schools of thought, theories and epistemological standpoints that rely on essential explanations are considered as foundational perspectives³² (Hollis, 1996; Marchart, 2007; Daín, 2011). These perspectives, characterised by a teleological conclusion to some extent, are grounded on essentialist explanations of the origin and development of human nature, agency, historical cycles, social structures, politics and other concepts. In contrast with these explanations, a post-foundational stance implies the subversion of foundational premises and not only their denial. This stance problematises the essentialist explanations by questioning the possibility of reaching a stable structure or final ground wherein a social order is constructed. The stability of a foundational perspective is challenged by noting the limitations of any explanation based on an essentialist understanding of the elements within the social. To overcome the foundational character of such schools of thought, the critics of these approaches call for a ‘quasi-transcendental’ distinction that is perceived from a philosophical stance rather than a scientific one (Marchart, op. cit.: 5-6).

In this context, it is of the utmost importance to distinguish that a basic anti-foundationalism stand denies the existence of any ground (Sayyid and Zack, 1998). Instead of a situation of ‘no-foundation’, the point of post-foundational political thinking is to consider the setting of contingent foundations (Butler, 1992). The argument of contingent foundations implies a focus on the multiplicity or failed unicity of the elements within the social (Laclau, 2004: 325). If the essence of the system, structure or subject is questioned, it is because the whole concept of the social is problematised. For instance, Laclau explains that the category of totality is a horizon and not a ground (2005: 71). The central issue, nonetheless, is to think through contingency and multiplicity. The contention of this thinking is to consider the many possibilities available that are contingent rather than to reach the ‘final definition’ of some term. For instance, this multiplicity of foundations attempts to establish that the ‘being of peace’ reflects the basic post-foundational stance. Laclau and Mouffe present this argument, “Society and social agents lack any essence, and their regularities merely

³² For example, Oliver Marchart (2007: 5) considers that “behaviourism, economic determinism, positivism, or sociology” are examples of foundational theories. See also: Delanty (2009).

consist of the relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of a certain order” (2001: 98).

This explanation entails that there are two situations that run parallel to one another. One of them rejects that any element in the social has a ‘pure essence’, while the other claims that negativity affects any element ‘dwelling’ in the social. The first argument indicates that the system or structure is unable to perform the role of ultimate centre. From this ontological position, consequently, the notions of social order or subject are seen as incomplete and contingent (Howarth, 2013: 5). Henceforth, the centre lacks the capacity to fully determine the rest of the elements. The idea of the political challenging “the founding acts of a system” is linked to the second argument that the social is constructed based on the notion of “lack” or negativity—explicitly—, the failure of the structure to construct a full account of social reality. The whole concept of the social is problematised and calls for an ontological differentiation. The argument is that the social is not an entity formed a priori out of coincidence or ex-nihilo; this stance stresses the intervention in the formation of any element within the social (Torfing, 1999: 302).

From a Derridean perspective, it is in the undecidability that takes place at the moment of decision when something is excluded. In this way, if this thinking is translated into social and political theorisation, the elements stay incomplete and negativity is constitutive (Laclau, 1990: 16). The assumption is that any social relation or formation is not fixed or closed, and that the incompleteness of the structure and the constitution of social objectivity are acts of power (Laclau, 1990, Mouffe, 2000: 21). For Laclau and Mouffe, the openness of the social implies a reflection of the construction of identities, the articulation of discourses and the achievement of hegemony. It also implies the possibilities of different features, such as antagonism or heterogeneity, as constitutive of the social. This leads to the next point of reference based on discourse theory. The work of Laclau and Mouffe is an in-depth and complex conceptual edifice that requires a detailed elaboration.³³ In the next section, I briefly introduce discourse theory and explain the main elements that are included in my analytical context.

³³ The complexity of discourse theory is remarkable due to the number of concepts and explanations involved. It is presented in different ‘segments’ according to the aim of the chapter. Chapter 2 is fully dedicated to explaining the main tenets of Laclau and Mouffe’s work. In Chapter 4, I give details about the analytical concerns of this perspective.

1.4.3 Second point: discourse and identity through a poststructuralist approach

The second point of reference will display a whole poststructuralist approach to address discourse and identity. This can be regarded as the central point of reference for the conceptual approximation in the sense that my aim is to show the potential of poststructuralist political theorisation and analysis concerning discourse and identity.

Specifically, this point of reference is concretised in the analytical context that I will propose. This is founded on the idea that discourse theory is open to include “disparate empirical phenomena” (Glynos et al., 2009: 10) to form an object of study (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). As I explained before, the analytical context takes one aspect of the notions of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity, which I will explore and reflect upon in three conceptual settings, respectively. I talk about settings in order to exemplify the conditions of possibility of different configurations of discourse and identity and to follow the interrelations of the logics of difference and equivalence. This is what I refer to as exploring social objectivity. The analytical context is the result of reflecting on discourse theory’s concepts and, at the same time, noticing that a variety of actors with contrasting social and political views refer to the world as a social and political formation.

The analytical context will consider a first setting in which a hegemonic discourse is constructed without opposition. In their most renowned book, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (HSS), Laclau and Mouffe write, “Hegemony is, quite simply, a political type of relation, a form, if one so wishes, of politics; but not a determinable location within a topography of the social” (2001: 139). Hegemony, from a discursive perspective, points to understanding the moves that articulate a chain of difference in order to establish a dominant and stable stance. It occurs when one perspective is naturalised and reaches a stable acceptance (Jørgensen and Phillips, op. cit.: 37). The hegemonic intervention, in this sense, is the expansion of a particular stance into the concurrence of diverse groups and demands. This practice entails the creation of a new configuration from a dispersion of elements. Hegemonic practices are a form of political activity that seek to bring together diverse identities and subjectivities for a common project (Howarth and Stavrakakis, op. cit.: 14). This idea is the guideline for my analysis of a hegemonic context. This context will follow the expansion of an account of social objectivity that aims to stabilise meaning on its own terms, including the many aspects available in a given social and political setting. The case proposed for this setting is the United Nations.

However, hegemony still contains the openness of the social and the limitations and struggles to establish a stable and definitive foundation. Antagonism appears in the constitution of borders where the process of inclusion and exclusion takes place. By rejecting the determinism of a priori societal logic in the creation of social and political identities, Laclau contends that it is by consolidation or dissolution of political frontiers that discourses and identities are constructed or fragmented (Laclau, 1990: 160). For Laclau “antagonism is already a form of discursive inscription” (2004: 318-9). Thus, antagonism is one possibility because the incapability of any structure to control the elements. This is the basic relation of hegemony and antagonism. An exterior continually affects a project preventing its full constitution. Consequently, it is challenged when other positions and identities claim this privileged position (Jørgensen and Phillips, op. cit.: 48-9). In this case, the contextualisation of antagonism will follow how two accounts struggle in a divided space. The second setting focuses on antagonism through collective identities and the representation and dispute of a meaningful reference. The reference for this setting is the discursive articulation of world peace during the Cold War.

The third concept comes from the final development in Laclau’s theoretical framework. A set of demands not represented or lacking a recognisable presence is considered to have the status of heterogeneity (Laclau, 2005). The concept of heterogeneity complements the possibility of considering different conformations of identities beyond those negatively expressed in antagonism (Thomassen, 2005). In this way, I contextualise heterogeneity to localise and represent a marginalised discourse and identity. In Laclau’s words, a heterogeneous element in any given social field can be addressed as ‘the outside’, i.e. as the excess or surplus of meaning that even in its exclusion is possible to identify (2005: 150).

The notion of heterogeneity considers the way new articulations appear and bring challenges to the system or structure. In general terms, this category recognises the possibility of unrepresented actors as part of the social and political landscape. The way the setting of heterogeneity is contextualised aims to expose the dislocation and those views of social objectivity articulated from a disregarded position. The logic of this context is to consider that heterogeneity is noted when an actor or group does not find representativeness. The lack of representation or exclusion is the motive that triggers an actor and relates to the dynamics of hegemony and antagonism. In this scenario, therefore, the analysis will consider the moment when this heterogeneous element appears in its immediate context with a set of social and political demands. This setting will take into consideration how a discourse and identity dislocate the social field from the margins and elaborate a whole view of the social. Accordingly, the final setting

reviews the irruption of the Zapatista movement and the articulation of a counter-hegemonic discourse.

These three cases share an analytical reference that is the discursive and visual representation of the ‘world’ characterised with ideas of a socio-political organisation. This figurative representation becomes a place for convergence and divergence in which all kinds of local, national and international actors come together with their accounts of social objectivity. The settings and the cases will reflect different configurations of discourse and identity. My analysis will provide insight into the tensions and limitations of constructing a hegemonic stance, on the negation of the antagonist-other and the discursive confrontation of one signifier, and on the dislocation of the social field with the irruption of an actor that challenges the status-quo with a counter-hegemonic stance. The analysis and discussion will include the discourse theory’s concepts of logics of difference and equivalence, social objectivity, discursivity, the articulation of signifiers and nodal points, and the concepts of myths and imaginaries. This will be complemented with the post-structural notions of deconstruction, textuality and intertextuality. All of these concepts are explained in the following two chapters.

The settings are the context in which different (political) attempts attempt to arrange meaning and identities. At stake in these settings is nothing less than the attempt to constitute totalities and stabilise formations of social and political organisation. I will call this situation —the trajectories to the centre—, referring to the endless attempts to constitute a final foundation. This expression is the allegorical view of the attempts to reach a stable and final position in which the social is configured and controlled from a privileged positioning. In these attempts, or trajectories, the three concepts are a fundamental theoretical reference.

1.4.4 Third point: the political dimension of the text and visual representations

The last point of reference implies an acknowledgement of the political dimension of the text and visual representations and their analysis through certain ‘poststructural strategies’. Firstly, I will draw on poststructuralist readings on the politics of representation (Campbell, 1992, Der Derian and Shapiro, 1989, Shapiro 1988, Shim 2014) to problematise the meaning within the representation. In this way, I intend to address the politics of representation through a specific stance on textuality and intertextuality. In addition, I will refer to discursivity as the analytical level and to the ‘textual’³⁴ as a general approach for reading the research material. One central feature

³⁴ These concepts are explained in Chapter 3.

of this sort of reading will be developed through Jacques Derrida's concepts of metaphysics of presence, logocentrism and deconstruction.

In line with this stance on textuality, the dissertation addresses the way taken-for-granted images and words feed our visions and understanding of the social world. My discursive analysis will cover a wide range of images and written sources that bring about the possibility of following the politics of representation that underlie our views of the world. Hence, this research stresses the importance of the discursive and visuals. Concerning the combination of documents and images as sources, I see a complementary relation between these two types; I do not favour one over the other. The idea of combining two types of sources is also based on the 'openness' of a post-structural perspective and discourse theory's analytical concerns. I therefore combine 'traditional' sources as documents (e.g. official declarations, founding texts, reports), or speeches with posters, illustrations and other types of visual material.

In the specific case of visual representations, the interest follows the importance of the use of this material depicting societal life and its double intervention in politics. I refer to this double intervention as the primary fixation of meaning and the way this material is open to re-interpretation. In the process of developing the analytical context of this work, I realised how often visual representations are used as a source of legitimacy and the multiple ways of reading the same representations. For this reason, I decided to address this issue by looking to the politics of representation and the discursive articulation of disperse elements. These elements, in one way or another, feed our understanding of social reality including situations of peace and conflict.

In this sense, the discursive use of symbolic references and visual representations is the final aspect that my work emphasises. Despite gaining prominence, the visual aspect continues with an insufficient presence in various academic fields (Stocchetti and Kukkonen, 2011: 1). My interest in addressing and understanding the visuals stems from the critical concerns around them (Bleiker, 2001, 2009, 2018; Fyfe and Law, 1988) and the insightful reflections on the visual taking place in situations of peace (Möller, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013, Möller and Shim, 2018) and conflict (Campbell, 2007). In addition, my interest in the visuals develop through reflections on methodological concerns (Rose, 2012; Sturken and Cartwright, 2001), analyses that address power issues through political cartoons and collages (Curticapean, 2011; Kangas, 2007; Särämä, 2014) and the aspect of visual representation in photographs and satellite imagery (Shim, 2014).

Concerning the visibility of peace and conflict, my work aims to offer a discursive reading that highlights the political dimension in the representation of these issues. I consider that the images that will be examined maintain a connection with some of the key concerns of visual peace research (Möller, 2013). Specifically, my analysis will try to

expose, from the discursive perspective, how images operate in societal conflict (general aspect) as well as the visualisation of peace (ibid.: 19). These two aspects appear permanently in the three conceptual settings that will be analysed. Moreover, the setting of antagonism directly addresses the visualisation and representation of peace but from a conflictual perspective.

1.5 Intended contribution

I stated in the first page that I use the word approximation in the sense of ‘getting closer’ two separate elements. I intend for this dissertation to become an ‘approximation’ that links the conceptual and analytical elements that I will use with the field of Peace and Conflict Research. The ‘contingent essence’ of this contribution can be regarded as heuristic (Thomassen, 2017: 540) in the sense that it provides insight into a conceptual perspective with new lines, difficulties and openings in this field of studies. The approximation is developed with the aim to outline a different perspective in Peace and Conflict Research to achieve a better understanding of the political dimensions that construct discourses and identities. My approach attempts to validate that the academic endeavour can positively expand with a closer relation or ‘approximation’ of some of the conceptual means of my ontological-theoretical-analytical framework to the existing literature in Peace and Conflict Research. Thus, the critical outline of this dissertation is the interrogation of the settlement of meaning and representation and the ways this settlement is used to make claims of social objectivity.

On the first page, I also acknowledged that the scope of this work thrives between the necessity to organise the social with the fixation of meaning and the impossibility to achieve a definitive foundation. The framework in which I propose to address this scope comprises specific ontological explanations and a vast range of theoretical concepts that are also available to adapt in analysis. From the criticisms to the essentialist understanding of the social and the political, discourse theory’s arguments enter into a post-foundational terrain in which the tension between contingency and necessity is constitutive. The social is seen as an open and contested space affected by political interventions; therefore, all the efforts to establish a solid foundation (social order) are contingent. In consequence, the social consists of numerous projects that engage in the articulation and re-articulation of discourses and identities. The context in which both identities and discourse are constituted is the relation between differences and equivalences.

I assert that all the elements grounding the dissertation reactivate and/or open some conceptual and analytical references that can be useful in this field of study. The analysis and discussion proposed as this dissertation's objective and contribution bring the following issues to the forefront: hegemony, contingency, incompleteness, the political intervention in the fixation of meaning (the articulation of discourse), the relationality of identities, textuality and intertextuality, and the analysis of images and discourses. My approach develops from a comprehensive poststructuralist perspective that aims to expose and deconstruct the investment and intervention marking the inside/outside of the logos. These are all of the points that I consider that contribute novel ideas to Peace and Conflict Research.

And, it is here, I contend, where this dissertation finds its critical motivation. The critical dimension of this work is to expose how the process of naming involves decisions that are formative of discourse and identity. After all, "representation is always an act of power" (Bleiker, 2010: 24). I work with the understanding that meaning and representation become the first frontier; it is the first place where social difference is inscribed and formalised. This type of inquiry shows that assigning meaning involves a fluctuation of possibilities. By looking at what is included and excluded in signifiers such as peace, union, security and threat, the grounds and limits of a project can be located. It is by looking who entails the 'we' when the 'other' is revealed. It is when the 'other' is demonised in the discourse that conflict is strengthened. Ultimately, this dissertation intends to be a reminder of the dimension of power comprised by words and images in our everyday lives.

This dissertation comprises nine chapters including this introduction. The following two chapters include all the conceptual references that will make this conceptual approximation. Chapter 2 is completely focused on presenting the theoretical work of Laclau and Mouffe. These authors' ontological and theoretical explanations keep an abstract consistency that requires some elaboration to show their relation and explanatory usefulness. All discourse theory's concepts are deeply interrelated, and I will clarify the ones that be part of the analysis. This chapter has an introductory and explanatory character giving an overview of the whole discourse theory's conceptual corpus.

Chapter 3, in turn, addresses the politics of representation, textuality and intertextuality. This chapter exposes different poststructuralist ideas about discourse and textuality. I also introduce some of the concepts of Jacques Derrida that have been used for social and political issues. In the conclusion of this chapter, I offer insight into the way I will consider and approach the research material. A deconstructive perspective

will allow me to concentrate on the level of analysis that I propose. This chapter complements my conceptual framework based on post-structuralist political thinking.

In Chapter 4, I present the strategies for discourse analysis and the visual methods that will be applied in the analytical chapters. I will draw on some of the scholars who have outlined different strategies that consider discourse theory's concepts and analytical concerns. For the visual methods, I will follow two of the strategies suggested by Gillian Rose. Additionally, I explain issues concerning the research material and the way I consider an immediate and intended context for presenting and analysing the images and written documents.

In Chapter 5, I give an account of the working frame constructed for the conceptual settings. Firstly, the analytical context, strategies and concepts are detailed. Thereafter, I outline the analytical context based on the contextualisation of the concepts of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity. I also explain the content of the three conceptual settings, the analytical reference and the relationality and general terms of the discussion that follows. Additionally, I comment on the practicalities and arrangements of the settings.

The following three chapters correspond with the analysis of the conceptual settings. On the one hand, the conceptual approximation is grounded in Chapters 2 and 3 and is complemented with the strategies and methods detailed in Chapter 4. On the other hand, the constructed analytical context enables me to display the application of the concepts and the exploration of social objectivity with an analytical reference through hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity. As I previously explained, each setting, or analytical chapter, will address a specific logic of the concept that is contextualised, and this is reflected in the cases proposed. At the beginning of each analytical chapter, I introduce the cases, the literature related to my analytical context and the way my analysis contributes to the overall discussion at stake. Lastly, Chapter 9 brings together all the relevant aspects of the analysis. The conclusion incorporates an overview of the whole approach in relation to the proposed approximation.

2 DISCOURSE THEORY'S CONCEPTUAL EDIFICE

The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe

This chapter serves as an initial step—to introduce and get closer discourse theory with the field of Peace and Conflict Research. Therefore, I provide a detailed overview of Laclau and Mouffe's principal concepts and arguments. With the aim of outlining a conceptual approximation, this requires a comprehensive explanation of the perspective proposed. Firstly, I situate the background and main perspectives from which discourse theory developed. This also includes some of the criticisms of Laclau and Mouffe's work and the current debate regarding discourse theory's future. The next concern is to explain the ontological arguments that characterise post-foundational thought and discourse theory. It is necessary to explain the differentiation between the social, the political and politics and to consider that the discursive dimension and the possibilities of social configuration through difference and equivalence follow the ontological argument about the social and the political.

I then concentrate on the theoretical level of discourse theory. I begin with an explanation of the logics of difference and equivalence and describe how these logics appear within the concepts of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity. These logics, then, also affect the subject in addition to the conformation of discourse and identities. Hence, in the last sections, I address the topics of social objectivity, discursive dynamics, subjectivity and the political aspect of social identity. This is complemented with the notions about myths and imaginaries and Laclau's argument about the paradox of the universal and the particular. Through the presentation of all these concepts and topics, I will point out how they will be used in discussion in the analytical chapters. In the last section, I recapitulate the whole approach. I regard the work of Laclau and Mouffe as an 'edifice' based on the strategic and functional articulation of many explanations and concepts that build a whole. All of the conceptual elements keep a direct relation, and this make necessary to include a comprehensive exposition of them. Regarding the theoretical discussion, I do not intend to address on-going debates on discourse theory's concepts nor to propose something novel. Nevertheless, the analysis will give an

account of the interrelation of different discursive configurations, which implies drawing attention to other conceptual aspects.

2.1 Conceptual background and current status

Generally speaking, the philosophical roots of discourse theory are analytical philosophy, phenomenology and structuralism (Laclau, 1993: 431). In addition, Marxism, hermeneutics and Lacanian psychoanalysis were also determinants in developing discourse theory and the main schools of thought that influenced these authors (Howarth, 2000a: 10-12; Phelan and Dalhberg, 2011: 15). Important ideas were taken, criticised and developed from these perspectives into a new theoretical frame known as discourse theory (Torfing, 1999: 4). In this way, the works of Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Ferdinand de Saussure became the main influences.³⁵ Authors such as Michael Foucault and Ludwig Wittgenstein have also served as influential, but they appear in specific moments.³⁶ The philosophical and academic works published in France through the 1960s that criticised structural thinking and the recognition of the 'post-modern' condition had a definitive impact on their work. This was complemented with the inclusion of hermeneutics, which gave discourse theory the interpretative dimension required to go beyond observable facts and actions (Howarth, 2000a: 10-11).

After the publication of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the work of Laclau and Mouffe engaged, among other topics, with the universal and particular debate, agonistic pluralism, the concept of the political and populism, respectively. *HSS* is considered their major work not only in terms of discourse but also in terms addressing a theorisation of the subject, political antagonism, hegemony and radical democracy. From a deconstructive perspective, Laclau continued his theoretical work addressing various 'logics': the logic of signification (the relation between signifiers and the signified); of representation (representative/represented); of tolerance (intolerance); of

³⁵ I do not provide detailed descriptions of all the authors mentioned. The work of each author entails a considerable number of concepts and assumptions. Rather, I present a shortened account of their work with the aim to focus on the points from which Laclau and Mouffe developed their perspective.

³⁶ I am referring, for instance, to how these authors are referenced in the explanations of the section *Articulation and Discourse* in *HSS* (2001: 105-09). Discourse theory finds similar conclusions, such as Wittgenstein's notion of 'language games'. However, Laclau declares the differences with Foucault's understanding of 'discursive formations', the principle of unity (Laclau [1993], 2007: 544) and the 'positivity of discourses' and the lack of ontic and ontological distinctions as discourse theory (Hansen and Sonnichsen, 2014: 261).

power (liberation); of equivalence and difference; and of universalisation and particularisation (Åkerstrøm Andersen, 2003: 59-61). Laclau's last book was *On Populist Reason*³⁷ (2005). Chantal Mouffe focused and linked the topics of the political (1993, 2005), radical democracy (2000) and agonistic politics (2013) as an alternative to liberal democracy.

In the introduction, I mentioned some of the criticisms towards discourse theory. Not all them reject discourse theory *per se*, as there have been exchanges to clarify positions (Laclau and Bhaskar, 2007), while other works have engaged in productive debates and responses (Butler et al., 2000; Critchley and Marchart, 2004; Hall, 1996, Hansen, 2014; Rorty, 1996; Valentine, 2001; Widder, 2000; Žižek, 1990);. Additionally, others have proposed different theoretical openings (Nabers, 2015; Newman 2005; Wingenbach, 2011). The anti-positivist position of discourse theory (Glynos et al., 2009) is another expected point of rejection. This is not only targeted towards discourse theory but also to the theories and approaches based on social constructivist views. In the case of discourse theory, there are different works (Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; Marttila, 2016; Åkerstrøm Andersen, 2003) that explain the epistemological procedures, logics and strategies to apply concerning this approach.

On the other hand, the 'past, present and future' of discourse theory has been discussed, and the dialogue is open. Aletta Norval (2000) posed the most significant questions related to the logics of equivalence and difference, criticising the essentialisation of antagonism, and the unclear distinction of myths and imaginaries. Laclau (2004) addressed these limitations years later, and he provided a specific answer regarding the issue of antagonism and heterogeneity in his final book (2005). Overall, the conceptual development of discourse theory is open (Norval, 2004b; Thomassen, 2005; Howarth 2013), and there are recent methodological and applied contributions to this perspective (Marttila 2016, Nabers 2015). Some of these contributions will be considered in the following chapters. An initial reading of the 'infinite of the social', the 'infinite play of differences' and the 'impossibility of fixating meaning' due to an 'excess of meaning' (Laclau, [1983] 1990: 90) is an intellectual challenge; however, this is the conceptual asset that makes discourse theory a unique perspective. In the subsequent three sub-sections, I situate the grounds of Laclau and Mouffe's work.

³⁷ This work still has original content. For a critical assessment of this book and a reply from Laclau, see Gaonkar, D. P. and Hariman, R. (eds.) 2012 special issue of journal *Cultural Studies* Vol 26 Nos. 2-3. The book *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society* (2014) is a collection of essays previously published.

2.2 Decentring the structure...with the post-structure

On the 'systemic' level, the origin of discourse theory can be traced to de Saussure's work complemented with Derrida's criticisms of this work. A 'structuralist understanding' of a system considers that there is a stable origin, existence and development of the object, subject or structure at stake. The influence of structuralism was considerable through the 20th century in social studies. The conceptual development of structural linguistics exposed a new way to understand social structures and the forces and causes that shape them.

However, the limitations of structural thinking that Derrida noted opened the possibility to expand the understanding of social meaning and its relation to signifying systems and practices. In general, de Saussure's theory addressed the conditions that make shared meaning possible. This understanding of the structure was extended as theoretical reference to study societal and cultural issues. In this thinking, the 'structure' comprises the totality of linguistic relations in which an act of language is possible. For de Saussure, the structure is predominantly *synchronic* (static), and language is a system structured by arbitrariness and negation. This reinforces the feature of a closed system (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 112-3). A temporal dimension, or *diachronic*, is also present, but the synchronic is more determinant (Howarth, 2013: 25). In terms of the constitution of the structure, this understanding lacks an explanation of this process and is not questioned because the structure is considered as a totality and as a constant unit that has always been present (Finlayson and Valentine, op. cit.: 8-11).

In a given structure, the symbolic system has the capacity to determine meaning and the functional organisation of the society as a whole. The system has a basic unit in the sign. Saussure made the famous differentiation of the sign, in the signifier (material aspect) and signified (conceptual aspect), and this was considered as an arbitrary relation. For Saussure, language is a system of signs; a sign is an arbitrary reflexion of the relation of signifier and signified in a closed end. There is not a necessary co-relation between these two parts of the sign (Laclau, [1993], 2007: 542). Consequently, the structure determines the subject and its actions and does not permit changes due to the consideration that it has a closed composition. In this view, social identity is stable only when reproducing itself and reinforcing the structure. Structural linguistics was extended to the study of social sciences with the anthropological work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Following de Saussure's linguistic model, societies were regarded as complex symbolic systems in which the structures determined the processes and actions of the societal elements (Howarth, 2000a: 23). The limitations of the whole structuralist understanding relate to its dependency on the unchanging existence of its object

(identity or structure) and on the capacity of the symbolic system to regulate acts of meaning and the organisation of society. This configuration would imply that relations of order and power remain timeless and ahistorical. This situation represents that contingency and the historicity that permeates the structure and actor are downplayed (Finlayson and Valentine, op. cit.: 11).

Saussure's work on linguistics in reference to social issues contains some of the basic tenets of discourse theory. Specifically, poststructuralist thinking acknowledges the relational principle that affects the sign. A system of differences is the 'structure' that makes a sign significant. The 'identity' of the sign is due to its negative relation to other signs in a given structure. The theoretical limitation is that the system remains closed with the capacity to fully determine all of the elements inside. Furthermore, Saussure's rigid distinctions between speech/writing and the signifier/signified (Howarth, 2000a: 42), prompted criticism from Jacques Derrida.³⁸ Derrida's essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", included in the book *Writing and Difference* (1978), targets the "structurality of the structure"; with this, Derrida offered a new understanding about the limitations and openness of the structure. Derrida elaborates on Saussure's distinction of speech over writing—it is one of his most acknowledged criticisms, not only in relation to Saussure's work but also to the binary thinking in 'Western' metaphysical understanding. Derrida argues that Saussure's consideration of binary opposition shows how one end is hierarchically placed over the other. This means essentialising, for instance, the inside in reference to its opposite, i.e. the outside. This 'inside/outside' dichotomy demonstrates that one part is completely necessary for the existence of the opposite. Derrida presents this argument,

The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a play based on a fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which itself is beyond the reach of play... And again on the basis of what we call the center (and which, because it can be either inside or outside, can also indifferently be called the origin or end, arche or telos) ([1978] 2005: 352).

I view the above quote as effectively exposing poststructuralist thinking. Derrida's own account of discourse reveals the openness and possibility of signs to be interpreted and reinterpreted according to a contextual frame. Thus, the structure is incapable of performing the ultimate role of the container of meaning. The inability to fix any final meaning weakens the role of the structure (Howarth, 2000a: 42). The poststructuralist version of discourse analysis overcomes the rigid difference marked between *langue*, the

³⁸ Derrida's work is generally considered as 'poststructuralist', but he did not claim this 'label' for his work.

underlying structure, and its effect on *parole*, the practice of language. For this school of thought, it is necessary to think beyond the assumptions that the structure is a stable point of reference or centre and that language and society are essentially ordered. This version proposes a consideration of a single process wherein the structure exists in the discursive practices that reproduce and transform it (Jørgensen and Phillips, op. cit.: 139).

2.3 The post-Marxist perspective

Laclau and Mouffe follow the concern of Marxist theory about social domination and the role of ideas in the establishment of social relations. Nonetheless, some core assumptions are re-conceptualised and formulated in terms of discourse analysis (Howarth, 2000a: 10-2). Their criticisms point to specific ideas of Althusser's and Gramsci's work; due to this situation, Laclau and Mouffe position their work in the 'post-Marxist' camp. This position is explained in these terms, "But if our intellectual project in this book is post-Marxist, it is evidently also post-Marxist. It has been through the development of certain intuitions and discursive forms constituted within Marxism, and the inhibition or elimination of certain others, that we have constructed a concept of hegemony [...]" (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 4).

In the second edition of *HSS*, they explain that this label must be understood as the re-elaboration of original concepts to reach further development of them. Laclau and Mouffe's way of theorising needed specific points of rupture with some of the concepts and claims within this tradition. In this book, Laclau and Mouffe expose certain limitations in the ideas of Althusser and Gramsci. Althusser's work serves as a point of entry to consider a 'post-Marxist' stance. In *HSS*, one of the main goals of Laclau and Mouffe is the revision of Althusser's concept of ideology (including subjectivity) and the re-formulation of Gramsci's concept of hegemony. In both cases, according to Laclau and Mouffe, the accounts on ideology and politics maintain a certain point of essentialism (ibid.: 69, 98).

Following the argument of contingency and incompleteness, Laclau and Mouffe criticise the Marxist model of society. This comprises the economic base and the political-ideological structure, which both form the totality of the social; this structure has the status of an unalterable essence behind the variations of social life (Marchart, op. cit.: 136). The base (economic) performs as the main foundation from which the rest of relations or actions develop. This form of totality can be regarded as a "founding totality" in the sense that it presents itself as an object of knowledge. This view implies

a closed system in which, for example, the structure would always determine social identity (Laclau, 1990). In Althusser's view, ideology is a constitutive practice affecting the subject through interpellation. This theorisation of ideology also implies an epistemological break from 'classical' Marxism, in which Althusser rejects an empiricist epistemology in the subject's constitutive experience (Howarth, 1998: 269).

In Althusser's social ontology, social formations comprise different systems of practice. The economic, political, ideological and theoretical (or scientific) systems reproduce the mechanism of dominance within the capitalist system. Althusser recognises the preponderance of the economic system over the other systems; this situation implies the continuation of deterministic views regarding social structures (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 97-104). In terms of identity and subject formation, Althusser considers that ideological discourse has a productive feature. His argument is that the process of interpellation takes place when the subject recognises and misrecognises itself (Howarth, 2000a: 94). The criticisms to this argument is that the subject keeps a position defined by the structure. In contrast, in discourse theory terms, the subject is still produced, but it has the capability to identify itself in diverse contexts. This is the reason that the concept of identity is central to discourse theory. The reading of class-based belonging is incomplete because the 'worker' is immersed in other discursive contexts at the same time. The material character of ideology, as identified by Althusser, is recognised in *HSS* (108-9). However, the division between science and ideology is rejected as this still enforces the view of true/false consciousness. Laclau and Mouffe disagree with Althusser's view on the differentiation of social formations and the consideration of ideological practices with a certain autonomy within these formations and the ultimate primacy of economic practices; instead, they argue that all practices have an articulatory character and that no single system of practices stays apart from the influence of the other formations (Howarth, 1998: 272).

The other central reference for Laclau and Mouffe is Antonio Gramsci. The theoretical contributions of Gramsci include his focus on the superstructure rather than the base and his rejection of the notion of 'false consciousness' that ideology creates. It is here where hegemony appears and takes place in the creation of people's consciousness. In this case, a class position is beyond economic or material means (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 66). Gramsci aims to understand how social consensus (ideological) and people's consciousness develop without the use of force. The concept of hegemony developed from different sources, though mostly from Lenin's concept of hegemony (Boothman, 2011). This is considered political cooperation between classes under the guidance of the worker class. Gramsci's view goes beyond the temporal cooperation for assessing power; he proposes hegemony as a way to achieve

a generalised representation and leadership (Howarth, 1998: 279-80). The central issue is the way ‘common interests’ are presented as a genuine general concern and not as a specific interest.

Laclau and Mouffe find two aspects of Gramsci problematic: his commitment to consider a fundamental social class or objective group as the initiator of social change and his regard of the ‘economic nucleus’ as the determinant of political and ideological structures (Howarth, 2000a: 99-100). For Gramsci, class belonging is a determinant for political and social action, and he insists in the transcendental relevance of the working class as a main actor to make societal changes within a capitalist society. Laclau and Mouffe (op. cit.: 70) consider that Gramsci’s thought retains an ambiguous understanding of the status of the working class. These authors do not support the idea that economic classes are the main agent capable of political and social action; for them, identity is the base for agency. They argue that Gramsci’s position supports a deterministic rationality with prearranged structures that define social and political actions. For this reason, Laclau and Mouffe consider that nationalism, ethnic, religious or geographical references can be articulated to achieve hegemony (ibid.: 141-2). These examples of identification do not exclude the rest, as the individual or the communities can share one or more.

For instance, in *HSS*, the authors include a deconstructive appraisal of some of the Marxist ideas previously presented with the intention of situating their basic theoretical arguments. Their aim is to overcome all remainders of essentialism in any of the elements within the social. They accept the label ‘post-Marxism’, “[a]s it is properly understood: as the process of reappropriation of an intellectual tradition, as well as the process of going beyond it” (ibid.: ix). I consider that the process of re-appropriation involves introducing the incompleteness of the structure and subject (overdetermination), problematising the fixation of meaning and including hegemony as the main reference for political analysis. This is the background from which Laclau and Mouffe advance a complex edifice of concepts and explanations. In the introduction, I sketched parts of the ontological argument. In the next sections, my aim is to provide more comprehensive explanations about their positioning on this concern.

2.4 The social, the political and the moment of foundation

Laclau and Mouffe draw upon a specific ontological positioning in order to discuss the formation of discourses and identities from an anti-essentialist perspective. This situation already hints at a type of intervention in order to form or configure an element.

Yet, the intervention needs a more detailed explanation that implies the differentiation of the social, the political and politics. This ontology of the social represents what can be considered as post-foundational political thinking³⁹ (Marchart, 2007). This can be traced back to the work of Martin Heidegger and the radicalised notion of the event denoting a moment of dislocation within the logic of a foundation. The idea of absence or lack as constitutive of social reality comes from Heidegger's metaphysics. The notion of absence means the retreat of the constitutive ground due to the inclusion and recognition of its negative dimension (ibid.: 2-13). This idea has a definitive impact on the explanation of how the social is constituted (Marchart, 2005, 2007).

For instance, Derrida's re-reading of Heidegger's metaphysics maintains the idea of absence extending the domain and play of signification ([1978] 2005:354). This is one of the core ideas theorised in poststructuralism. In consequence, theories based on post-foundational ideas reject a priori categories to explain social and political processes or elements and the inner essentialism involved. Under this view, the object as a complete and unified entity does not exist before its conceptual creation; hence, the 'necessary status' of historical or socio-political phenomena is considered problematic. Laclau states the following,

If we live in an era of deconstruction, it is because the crisis of essentialist universalism as a self-asserted ground has led our attention to the contingent grounds (in the plural) of its emergence and to the complex processes of its construction. This operation is, *sensu stricto*, transcendental: it involves a retreat from an object to its conditions of possibility. (1994a:1-2)

This argument changes and open new paths of thinking about the agents and structures as mutual constitutive but also as incomplete. Post-foundational thinking calls for the subversion of foundational premises. The subversion consists of looking for what was included and excluded at the moment of foundation. This stance questions totality, universality, essence and grounds as figures of a metaphysical foundation (Marchart, 2007: 2). In this sense, for instance, freedom and historicity are now considered on the premise of the absence of a final ground.⁴⁰ In *HSS*, this thinking is recognised with the famous dictum "Society is not a valid object of discourse. There is no single underlying principle fixing—and hence—constituting the whole field of differences" (2001: 111).

³⁹ Marchart also reviews the work of Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy and Claude Lefort as part of this school of thought.

⁴⁰ Reaching the conclusion that socio-political projects face uncertainty is not particular to a post-foundational thinking. Marchart (op. cit.: 3) explains that other schools of thought such as pragmatism (Richard Rorty) and 'conservative scepticism' (Michael Oakeshott) also question actions and decisions based on determinate grounds.

It is also expressed as an urge to “consider the openness of the social as the constitutive ground” (ibid.: 95). On the other hand, questioning a foundational view is generally labelled as “anti-foundationalist” (Sayyid and Zack, 1998). However, an anti-foundational stance suggests a closed denial of any type of ground with the risk of falling into an ‘anything goes’ situation of denying the existence of everything. Framing the critique in basic terms of complete negation does not improve the enquiry. The argument against this assessment is that the ‘anti-foundation’ becomes the new final foundation (Marchart, 2007: 12). In this way, if the ‘anti-stance’⁴¹ (nihilistic) does not propose an alternative, this dualistic context is a deadlock.

Following post-foundational political thought, it is necessary to differentiate the social from the political and, furthermore, the latter from politics. This ontological differentiation is one of the main arguments characterising the work of Laclau and Mouffe. Laclau defines the social as “the sedimented forms of ‘objectivity’ make up the field of what we will call the ‘social’” (1990: 35). Further, he defines the ‘political’ as “the moment of antagonism where the undecidable nature of the alternatives and their resolution through power relations become fully visible constitutes the field of the political” (ibid.). The ‘sedimented forms of objectivity’ refers to how social reality (objectivity) is constituted by meaning (discourse). Moreover, “objectivity, the being of objects, is nothing but the sedimented form of power; in other words, [it is] a power whose traces have been erased” (ibid.: 60). By ‘sedimented’, Laclau means the normalisation of a name or practice that does not show anymore the political decision at the moment of their constitution. On the other hand, ‘radical negativity’, as considered by Laclau and Mouffe, is the moment of antagonism that has a constitutive role for the elements within the social. Thus, the ensemble of decisions (grounding a new socio-political project, the meaning attached to it and the subjectivities involved) is the political intervention. This position shows why the moment of decision, or foundation, is considered as a crucial reference because it is the moment when a particular option is privileged and affecting another (undecidability).

Hence, in terms of the views that are supportive of the ontological importance of the political, the main issue is the primordial moment of the foundation of a social pact in which the organisation of relations is structured (Laclau, 1990; Žižek, 1991). This explains why the political is considered to play a constitutive role. Similarly, Chantal Mouffe defines ‘the political’ as an ontological condition found in every dimension of human society. Politics exist because structures are incomplete; a full closure (total control over an issue) would imply the omission of the ontological dimension of the political as constitutive of any social interaction (Mouffe, 1997). All these arguments

⁴¹ This reference is given in the case of some nihilistic or solipsistic perspectives.

reflect the decisive manoeuvre of defining the social and political from a philosophical standpoint. Further, I would add that it is this differentiation that clearly set apart perspectives theorising socio-political issues. This whole argument places more emphasis on the moment of foundation when decisions are taken as well as on the meaning assigned to the elements within the social. I consider that the conceptual contribution of Laclau and Mouffe is the articulation of these ontological arguments in a theoretical perspective that considers an anti-essentialist conformation of the social.

2.5 The ontological dimension of the political

In this section, I focus on the explanations about ‘the political’ or the “primacy of politics over the social” (Laclau, 1990: 33) because it reflects the elemental ontological stance of discourse theory. Laclau and Mouffe did not use the term ‘post-foundational’ to name their ontological positioning as such. The whole approach with the recognition of contingency, the rejection of essentialism and the incompleteness of structures and subjects are the arguments that situate discourse theory as post-foundational thinking. The primacy of politics clearly influences the other concepts and explanations. The conceptualisation of the political and the social is a definitive argument that characterises discourse theory. The political is considered to have two dimensions: “[T]he first is the notion of the political as the instituting moment of society...the second dimension of the political (is): the incompleteness of all acts of political institution” (Laclau, 1996c: 49).

I elaborate, firstly, on the historical development about the conceptualisation of the political. The first dimension was a reaction of the historic vision of the political as a “‘subsystem’ submitted to the necessary laws of society” (ibid.). The conceptual definition started by tracing a differentiation between the political from other domains of the social. This is accredited to Carl Schmitt’s book *The Concept of the Political*. In this case, the concept of the political lies in the “friend or foe” categories that guide the value-orientation in politics (Heller, 1991: 332). Mouffe makes a further distinction of these categories proposing ‘adversary’ as a reference instead of an enemy (1993: 4). From a philosophical view, the political can be theorised in two ways. It can be considered as a quality or factor that transforms something ‘non-political’ into this quality, or the other alternative is to consider the political as a domain in which anything that enters obtains the political feature (Heller, 1991: 330). The political has been

defined by contrasting schools of thought.⁴² For instance, in liberal thinking, it is considered as a neutral arena in which impartial arbitration would solve any dispute; it is also related to rights and a rational idea of justice.⁴³ In agonal theory, the political is experienced through the concept of care in relation to fulfilling the needs of concrete individuals. In Jurgen Habermas' account, the political is the space in which personal identity is established; in some feminist theories, it is linked to the arbitrary exclusions in gender issues (O'Sullivan, 1997).

On the other hand, some prominent scholars call for a differentiation between politics and the political. The political appears in different ways in the works of Hanna Arendt, Alan Badiou, Ernesto Laclau, Claude Lefort, Chantal Mouffe, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Rancière and Paul Ricoeur, among others. For these authors, the notion of the political is a specific rationality, an action in the public domain, the public sphere or the indication of an absent ground, respectively. However, to some extent, these authors agree with, the idea that it is necessary to split politics from within to reveal the absent ground of any social agreement (Marchart, op cit.: 4-7). In the case of Arendt, for instance, the political is framed in terms of the space of freedom and public deliberation in contrast to the view of conflict and antagonism (Mouffe, 2005a: 9).

Marchart considers Paul Ricoeur's essay *The Political Paradox* (1965) as the second major conceptual call on this topic. Ricoeur's point is to bring back the specificity and autonomy of the political, and he questions the use of political power in the name of a universal welfare.⁴⁴ His criticisms aimed to explain all social relations based on a specific economic logic (targeting the Marxist explanations of the prominence of this logic). For instance, the arrangement of the economy, as proposed by communist thinking, subordinates the political into a specific polity that imposes a rationale over the daily practices in politics. In this sense, economy is the sphere from which the rest of social and political relations are held (Marchart, 2007: 35-7). According to Ricoeur, this situation implies an imbalance between the hierarchical and consensual relations, in which the decisions made by the former convey the use of power to the detriment of the latter (the civilian part). Ricoeur's paradox lies between the social relations that cannot be reduced to conflicts between classes and the 'evil' consequences of the use of political power through politics. This author calls for the distinction between spheres

⁴² For a general overview of the concept, see: Heller (1991), Marchart, (2007), and O'Sullivan (1997).

⁴³ This is in reference to John Rawls' theory. For a criticism of this stance, see Mouffe (2000: 22-6).

⁴⁴ This is linked to the context of the Warsaw Pact troops' invasion of Hungary in 1956 and to the totalitarian use of political means during Stalin's regime in the Soviet Union.

(social, economic) in which a specific rationality (polity) is established to achieve unity in relation to the sphere of power (the political). This call for the autonomy of the political implies a differentiation from an ontological perspective (ibid.).

Here, it is important to clarify the stance of Laclau and Mouffe on this issue. The ontological and theoretical arguments overlap and complement each other. I have mentioned, according to Marchart, the theoretical perspectives considered as foundational and the criticisms pointed at them. Claude Lefort suggests that political science suppresses the ontological question due to its interest in representing the objects of knowledge that give them meaning and stage them prior to their formation. This situation is similar with the ‘neutral subject’ who searches for causal relations between phenomena aiming to find universal laws governing any social system (Lefort, op. cit.: 11). This type of subjectivity, framed as the ‘Cartesian individual’,⁴⁵ is directly related to a rational-positivism scheme in epistemological matters. Viewed from the ontological perspective, it implies that scientism is not enough to explain the incompleteness of the elements within the social and political dimensions. The political cannot be the object of study in political science; it can only be theorised from a philosophical view (Marchart, 2007: 6-8).

For authors such as Laclau, Lefort and Mouffe, ideological frameworks (e.g. liberalism or Marxism) influence the notion of politics applied in ‘mainstream’ approaches in social and political sciences⁴⁶ and in practical issues of governance. According to this criticism, this stance conceals and overlooks essential issues of social relations: the political and the moment of the foundation of the social. They reject the separation of society into different types of practices on given grounds. These authors also consider that the democratic order as the locus of power becomes an empty space (Norval, 2004a: 154). For example, this also means downplaying the pre-eminence of economic logics as a definitive source of influence for political and discursive processes (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 75-8).

For Laclau and Mouffe, the social and the political are independent but reliant spheres. The non-existence of any of those spheres is not possible. This is the second dimension mentioned before, “[t]he ‘politization’ of society appears as operating a double displacement: on the one hand there is, certainly, an expansion of the political at the expense of the social; but, on the other hand, politization involves also contingent

⁴⁵ This is usually represented as a male figure, as identified by feminist criticism (Macdonald, 1991).

⁴⁶ For Lefort (1998), political science and political sociology are examples of this logic. This also refers to positivist accounts applied to social and political phenomena because the foundational nature of this concept is used in positivist approaches.

production of the social link and, in this sense, a decentring of society” (Laclau, 1996a: 49). A society without a political dimension would be a closed order that only works through repetitive practices. On the other hand, only an omnipotent will would make a complete political institutionalisation possible. Politics come to exist because structures are incomplete, and a full closure (a total control over an issue) would imply the omission of the ontological dimension of the political as constitutive of any social interaction (Laclau, 1990). The works of Laclau and Mouffe, respectively, address the significance and specificity of the political, and this latter has a definitive influence on their concept of hegemony (Dyrberg, 2004: 241). As mentioned in the previous section, for Laclau, the social is the sedimented forms of objectivity. This means the normalisation of social objectivity that is mediated via discourse. The normalisation, however, is necessarily a process of hegemonic intervention. Hence, the political is the field in which decisions are taken but within an undecidable context. By questioning the essence of any given structure or actor, the radical condition in the ontological stance of Laclau and Mouffe implies the impossibility of closure (op. cit.: 122).

2.6 The ontological difference

In this perspective, pointing to the distinction⁴⁷ between politics and the political is known as the ontological difference (Marchart, 2007: 5-9). The call to establish differentiation follows the paradigmatic idea that politics in foundational theories lacks an ontological level. The main issue is to question the moment of foundation and to look inside to the grounds of the project that attempts to bring order to the social. The ontological difference reveals the limitation of political and social theories that assert the possibility of stable accomplishment is possible (ibid.: 9-10). Foundational accounts reduce the role of the political in the sense that social antagonism or political conflict is considered manageable within the realm of politics. The rejection of this situation provides a critical standpoint from which the relations, creation and position of subjectivities and the meaningful references linked to these can be scrutinised. This stance also allows for the questioning of the ‘natural’ principle by which a social arrangement is established, or the conceptual grounds used for legitimacy.

⁴⁷ Heidegger uses this ‘name’ to distinguish between “[b]eing and beings in its various manifestations” (Howarth, 2013: 97). According to Marchart, authors such as Schmitt, Ricoeur, Wolin, Laclau and Mouffe, Nancy, Badiou and Rancière support the idea of separately defining politics and the political (2007: 7).

For Claude Lefort, the political is revealed not in what is known as political activity (politics) but in the double movement in which the establishment of society emerges and then is concealed. In other words, the positive process through which a society is ordered and unified also implies a 'negative' side in which the locus of politics becomes particular and the principle sustaining the social arrangement is hidden (Lefort, 1988: 11). One 'practical' form of distinction between politics and the political involves the ontic and ontological levels.⁴⁸ Institutions, (political parties, governmental bodies), elections, personal practices and actions, treaties, international agreements and diplomacy are 'practical' issues conforming to the daily practice of governing (Mouffe, 2005a: 8-9). All of these aspects are considered part of the ontic level of politics and correspond with the decisive aim to ground society under a particular view (*ibid.*: 5). In this sense, politics imply a particular form of organisation in which legitimate authority is placed, and the 'technique of governance' is applied whether by elections or other rules of succession (Edkins, *op. cit.*: 2-4). The sum of practices will create a political system with the subsequent body of knowledge constituted to provide 'objective and reliable' measurements of phenomena within the political field (Finlayson and Valentine, *op. cit.*: 6-7).

The notion of the political, as difference, makes sense because of the argument of absence and the impossibility of a final ground. Any principle of a complete union or project attempting to converge permanently will fail because the ultimate character of the political is seen as a contested space. We are in a setting of partial attempts competing for a hegemonic position. Hence, the emergence of the ontological difference in political thought reveals the negative foundation in which every attempt to create and develop a final closure will be always challenged by other attempts. This action reveals that within the ontic level of politics, a specific discourse, a particular social system and a certain form of action take part in the effort to establish a symbolic order. Another way to understand is to consider the political as the place in which articulations take place and politics as the means the structuring of articulations (Dyrberg, 2004: 241).

In the institution of a new social order, then, a particular and historical version of what counts as politics and other aspects of social life are imposed in the exclusion of others (Edkins, *op. cit.*: 2). The ontological difference is seen in the incompatibility between the social, politics, policy and polity at the conceptual level and the political as

⁴⁸ Heidegger makes this distinction in his work about metaphysics; in the analysis of Dasein, the ontic level refers to the specific and observable characteristics of this figure. The ontological level focuses on the conditions of possibility of Dasein (Guitierrez Saenz, 1985: 204).

the antagonist of all these concepts; as mentioned before, these concepts are only ontical distinctions that are part of the same discursive regime, or they take place in a specific social system that is framed as unalterable. Mouffe gives this explanation, “[t]he political cannot be restricted to a certain type of institution or envisaged as constituting a specific sphere or level of society. It must be conceived as a dimension that is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological condition” (1993:3).

In this context, the political assumes the role as the principle of autonomy of politics, which is the moment of institution of a social system (Marchart, 2007: 8). In this sense, Mouffe’s definition of the political includes the constitutive condition of the political and the aspect of antagonism. From her perspective, politics is the set of practices and institutions from which a social arrangement (order) is organised. The ‘borders’ between the social and the political are unstable, as the interaction of social agents will define a certain order that will be renegotiated as other agents challenge the previous order (Mouffe, 2005a). As argued in *HSS*, “But insofar as the social is an infinitude not reducible to any underlying unitary principle, the mere idea of a centre of the social has no meaning at all” (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 139).

In recent reconsiderations of these arguments, Dyberg (2005) refers to two analytical levels in the logic of hegemony and the differentiation of the political and politics. According to this scholar, “The political refers to the terrain in which articulations take place, and politics refers to the structuring of articulations” (2005: 241). In this way, hegemonic relationships are dependent of the political because it has a “high-order level” for articulating the particular and universal and a “lower-order level” concerned with politics (ibid.: 243). The possibilities of these relations are explained in the next section. It is also necessary to keep the link open between social movements, political subjectivity and “heterogeneous excesses of the social [that] are gathered, quilted and articulated by the political to forge a hegemonic order of rule, relation and position among things and people” (Gaonkar, 2012: 190).

In the previous three sections, I provided an extensive overview of the ontological positioning of discourse theory as a post-foundational perspective. This positioning focuses on the pre-eminence of the political and the recognition that any foundation or structure is contingent and has an inherent lack that allows only a partial stabilisation. The most relevant dimension of this positioning is that it opens and exposes the political interventions and all the complexities of making decisions and excluding other options. This is the overall perspective that is the base of my dissertation and from which I will examine the analytical cases proposed. I consider that the arguments of post-foundational thinking are largely overlooked in Peace and Conflict Research. Thinking in the radicalisation of a foundational stance conveys a tension to any process or

structure that tries to establish order. This situation implies that many foundations (e.g. socio-political projects) attempt to achieve a position in a given social field. In other schools of thought, this conflictual aspect of the social is normally reduced to the mere confrontation of groups with different political interests. Thus, the theoretical and analytical tasks ahead must be carried in consideration of the impossibility of the closure of the social, as detailed before. This is the reason that the moment of foundation and the fixation of meaning are constantly highlighted in this critical perspective. Next, I will explain concerns about the logics that take place within a system project. These logics involve the limits that convey the notions of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity. On the need for post-foundational thinking, I think that the current trend of agonistic peace is completely indebted to post-foundational thinking or to the ontology of difference, and this has not been truly acknowledged by all the works on this topic. In my understanding, talking about an agonistic stance is only possible by understanding antagonism and negativity as conceptualised by Laclau and Mouffe (Mouffe, 1996).

2.7 Relations and limits through difference and equivalence

As argued above, ‘radical negativity’ refers to the impossibility of a stable ground. The attempt cannot avoid the inclusion/exclusion binary; therefore, the result is the imposition of boundaries on the practices and meanings that give legitimacy to this arrangement. In this section, I turn to the ‘systemic explanations’ of discourse theory. Including contingency and difference as ontological references further complicates the understanding and analysis of the social. Therefore, it is necessary to comprehend the limits of the elements and the dynamics that make them possible. To a certain extent, we encounter the (partial) definition and structuration of everything within the social.

Following the systemic explanation of structuralism, discourse theory acknowledges that a system of relational differences among the elements structures the social. Laclau and Mouffe contend that the logics of difference and equivalence necessarily affect any element. As mentioned previously, the system of differences, as postulated by Saussure, is acknowledged but problematised. In a closed system, the elements would obtain its fixed position due to the differential logic. The elements are only recognised by this difference, but because of the ‘full structured’ configuration, they are not able to change its position. The argument of incompleteness and openness challenges this configuration, stating that the structure is not able to fixate meaning definitively, and thus the surplus of meaning overflows the social. The relation of equivalence appears

to subvert the specificity of the element because the status of 'full presence' is negated (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 126-7). Torben Dyrberg offers this explanation, "[T]he differential nature of identity and signification entails that the relations between social entities can never be either purely internal or external... identity and signification exist in between interiority/presence and exteriority/absence (1997: 119).

In this clarification, the substantial part is to visualise the limits of the entities in the context in which the centre does not establish the limits. If the system works with purely differential identities, the interaction of the elements needs a complementary logic. This logic, according to Laclau and Mouffe, establishes the relations of equivalence that take place in reference to an 'exterior' of the difference. Laclau observes that "[e]quivalence is precisely what subverts difference, so that all identity is constructed within this tension between the differential and the equivalential logics" (2005: 70). Thus, a discursive exterior in which the identities remain open determines every social objectivity (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 110-1). The logic of difference refers to the construction of a relational totality based on mutual differences that will play a role in identity formation. The logic of equivalence includes a certain sameness between different identities (Laclau and Mouffe, *ibid.*: 127-34; Torfing, 1999: 300-1).

For Laclau and Mouffe, this system's differences and equivalences directly affect the whole structure of the social and, therefore, the configuration of discourse and identity. This system is the core conceptual reference because hegemony, antagonism, heterogeneity, identity and the articulation of discourses are dependent on these logics. Accordingly, in terms of identity, Laclau and Mouffe use the logic of equivalence to explain the creation of antagonistic positions within a discourse and the logic of difference for the expansion of a common identity. On the (political) configuration of the social, Laclau and Mouffe provide this explanation, "We, thus, see that the logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity". (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 130)

This consideration implies that the limits defining and organising space, signification and identities are dependent upon political intervention. Following the previous quotation, the formation of an antagonist alternative requires the logic of equivalence. This means that different groups holding a particular identity have an equivalent point in common. This is the equivalent point that discourse theory stresses. This process is necessarily against other identities. Both sides hold the negation of each other; therefore, the social field is divided in antagonism (Howarth, 1998: 277).

As seen, the logics of equivalence, difference, hegemony, and antagonism have a mutual determination. As I understand it, the most relevant explanation is the relationality within the system and how this aspect is constitutive of the elements.

Difference and equivalence subvert each other as part of the dynamics within the system. Jørgensen and Phillips further detail this process, “[A]ntagonisms are dissolved through hegemony, whereby the one discourse conquers the terrain and appears as the objective reality; the objective being that which has become taken-for-granted, that which we forget is contingent. The taken-for-granted emerges, then, when alternatives are pushed out of our vision” (2002:190).

In this explanation, the relevance of the logics of difference and equivalence is clear; therefore, their interrelation must be considered accordingly. In the analysis, I will consider both of these logics as the main guideline in the three conceptual settings to observe the configuration of discourse and identity. The ‘systemic’ explanation is the background to continue with the most acknowledged concepts of this perspective. I recognise that hegemony and antagonism have been the conceptual trademark of discourse theory. The notion of heterogeneity, however, needs to be considered as part of the analysis. In the following section, I present a more detailed account of the three concepts, and I briefly explain the aspects that I will contextualise and use for the analytical task.

2.8 Hegemony, antagonism, and heterogeneity

Hegemony is a concept that developed in different stages through four decades. Howarth (2000 and 2004) identifies three models⁴⁹ of this concept in Laclau’s work. In the book, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (1977), the issue of hegemony is related to fundamental social classes, and Laclau questions the necessary ‘class belonging’, as considered in Marxist views (Howarth, 2004: 258). In *HSS*, the second conceptualisation further develops the argument about openness and contingency. Hegemony is considered as a practice or “political type of relation”. Laclau and Mouffe reject Gramsci’s views that subjects are constituted in fundamental classes and that “[e]very social formation structures itself around a single hegemonic centre” (op. cit.: 138). This denial clearly shows the post-foundational character of discourse theory; the argument of the ‘hegemonic centre’ is challenged by a claim regarding the openness of the social and the possibilities of different socio-political projects to engage in hegemonic practices. The necessary condition for hegemonic practices is that antagonism is present in the social field and in the existence of contingent elements (floating signifiers) for which to contend. Discourse theory considers that hegemonic practices are possible because of the existence of antagonistic forces and the mutual

⁴⁹ For the exact explanation, see Howarth (2004: 272 Note. 4).

competence of these forces to appropriate conceptual elements in order to control them (ibid.: 134-142). This situation brings about the antagonist nature of social and political relations and the consequent formation of different identities around these relations.

Broadly speaking, Laclau and Mouffe ‘radicalised’ the Gramscian notion of hegemony but kept the basic idea that it is a central process to gain consent in a system of relations. These authors adapted the concept to explain how social actors compete to settle and fix the contingencies of the social. In this context, a hegemonic practice implies that a project aims to create and stabilise meaning on its own terms. The hegemonic move lies in part to ‘naturalise’ the acceptance of an ensemble of meaning weakening other ensembles into a marginal position. The success of a dominant discourse depends on the way the meaning of the marginalized discourses is negotiated and, at some point, appropriated to support the dominant position. In practice, the discourse is articulated through, for instance, the social demands that different groups or identities endorse.

Finally, Laclau’s third model of hegemony emphasises the contingency hegemonic subjects and the undecidability of social structures. Leaning more on Derrida, undecidability became a central reference because this notion exposes the contingencies of the social. Decisions are made in undecidable terrain, and those decisions involve hegemonic practices at certain point (Laclau, 1996a: 89). For instance, this undecidable character means that there is always a discursive exterior that influences the structure (Howarth, 2000a: 110-1). This new conceptual development⁵⁰ resulted in new explanations and concepts. Hegemony is related to the discursive exterior that is closely related to the notions of dislocation, myths and imaginaries (Laclau, 1990) as well as to an empty signifier (Laclau, 1996a).

In this later phase, Laclau argues about the complementarity of deconstruction and hegemony. He defines this as “the two sides of a single operation” (Laclau, 1996a: 88). His explanation is as follows, “For if deconstruction discovers the role of decision out of the undecidability of the structure, hegemony as a theory of decision taken in an undecidable terrain requires the contingent character of the connections existing in that terrain is fully shown by deconstruction” (ibid.: 90). I understand that deconstruction can be considered as a ‘way of reading’ or addressing a hegemonic intervention and as an attempt to establish a stable fixation. This reading reveals the contingency of the intervention because it shows what decisions were constitutive and what was excluded.

⁵⁰ This was presented in the books *New Reflections of the Revolutions of Our Time* (1990) and *Emancipation(s)* (1996), respectively. Some authors (Norval, 2005; Åkerstrøm Andersen, 2003: 56) note that in later stages, Laclau more consistently draws upon deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

This is the main point of undecidability, as conceptualised by Derrida, and indicates the significance of deconstruction for the analysis of the political dimension of the social. The point that discourse theory presents, on the one hand, is that the hegemonic intervention reaches a culminating point when meaning and practices are naturalised (a specific objectivity or articulation), and a new process of institutionalisation takes place (Torfing, 1999: 102-3). On the other hand, nevertheless, the intervention is contingent and permeated by the decisions that were excluded. In words of Derrida, “I want to recall that undecidability is always a determinate oscillation between possibilities (for example, of meaning, but also of acts)” (1998:148).

Contributing to the conceptualisation of the theory of hegemony, Norval argues that it is necessary to consider more aspects (Derrida’s ‘infrastructures’, e.g. iterability, supplementarity, remark) of deconstruction beyond the foreground of contingency. According to Norval, these aspects can lead to a wider understanding of political-ideological analysis through undecidability (2004: 139-141). In the next chapter, I will introduce some concepts related to Derrida and explain the relation and analytical possibilities between discourse and deconstruction. Relating to the conceptual trajectory of Laclau’s theory of hegemony, I agree with Howarth’s remark (2004: 263) that there is a continuity between the ‘second and third’ models of hegemony. In fact, aspects of both models appear in the conceptual setting addressing hegemony. My analysis will show this naturalisation and expansion of one discourse and identity through the inclusion of dissimilar demands and interests. There are views that question the relation of deconstruction and discourse analysis due to the need of the latter to reduce many elements to a system of dispersion. Still, the logic of signification that Laclau uses considers the battle of fixation over specific signifiers. In this way, discourse analysis is focused on the demonstration of hegemony, and deconstruction ‘opens’ the political showing undecidability (Åkerstrøm Andersen, op. cit.: 56-8).

The last issue I want to underline on hegemony is the need to distinguish Laclau’s theory of hegemony from other ‘general’ conceptualisations of this notion. Discourse theory works based on the understanding of existing power relations at any societal level and does not see it as a top-down approach of a centre exerting control over the rest of elements. Addressing hegemony from a discursive perspective offers a specific dimension of the political dynamics that are dismissed in other theoretical approaches. For instance, other ‘materialist’ perspectives (Agnew, 2005) assign a ‘hegemonic position’ to a political actor depending on accountable resources (e.g. armament) or because the actor has the capacity to impose interests due to a structural or strategic situation. This conception of hegemony generally refers to direct dominance or coercion without the process of consent. I do not intend to undermine these important aspects

(material capabilities or political influence) but instead aim to underline the contribution of considering hegemony in a discursive dimension and the possibilities of analysis involved (e.g. Herschinger, 2012). From this perspective, power is explained in these terms, “Power is not analysed in terms of a resource or capacity one can possess, store, or retrieve, or as a relation of domination. Power is conceived in terms of the political acts of inclusion and exclusion that shape social meanings and identities and condition the construction of social antagonisms and political frontiers” (Torfing, 2005: 23).

Moving to the concept of antagonism, its conceptualisation underwent a major change in Laclau’s second reassessment. The idea of radical negativity, translated as antagonism, is at the core of the argument against essentialist conceptions of political organisation, identity and subjectivity. In *HSS*, “the impossibility of closure” in the structure or subject is because the limit of all objectivity has a form: antagonism (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 121). Accordingly, discourse theory rejects actors with a fully constituted identity; instead, they argue that antagonism prevents the achievement of a complete identity, “But in the case of antagonism, we are confronted with a different situation: the presence of the 'Other' prevents me from being totally myself. The relation arises not from full totalities, but from the impossibility of their constitution” (ibid.: 125). Being considered as the limit, antagonism has a constitutive feature. Laclau, in a second ‘approximation’, still considers antagonism as the limit and believes that it reveals the contingent nature of all objectivity. He also introduces the idea of ‘constitutive outside’ as the element that blocks the identity of the ‘inside’ (Laclau, 1990: 17-8). However, according to Glynos and Stavrakakis (2004: 205), there is shift in Laclau’s ideas due to the focus on “limits of signification”. It implies a change in the conception of antagonism. The second conceptualisation defines it as a “discursive articulation” (ibid.). This change implies a different understanding of the limits of social objectivity. This new definition is the reason that Laclau gives so much significance to the category of ‘dislocation’, “every identity is dislocated insofar as it depends on an outside which both denies that identity and provides its condition of possibility at the same time (Laclau, 1990: 39).

This means that the limits can be partially stabilised (via a hegemonic intervention), but they are always open for a new configuration. Dislocations are the origin of new configurations, and they are understood as events or situations that an existent discursive order cannot symbolise (Howarth, 2000a: 111). Dislocation is the consequence of certain processes (e.g. commodification, globalisation) that affect current social spaces. Additionally, dislocation can be seen as a failure within the hegemonic order that indicates the point of undecidability previously addressed (Stäheli, 2003: 1). This important conceptual development has two consequences. The first is

the reconsideration that the limits are not necessarily grounded in antagonism. Laclau acknowledges that,

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the notion of limit is more or less synonymous with antagonistic frontier. Objectivity is only constituted through a radical exclusion. Later on I came to realize that this assimilation presented two flaws. The first, that antagonism is already a form of discursive inscription – i.e. of mastery– of something more primary which, from *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time* onwards, I started calling ‘dislocation’. Not all dislocation needs to be constructed in an antagonistic way. The second flaw is that antagonism is not equivalent to radical exclusion. What it does is to dichotomize the social space, but both sides of the antagonistic relation are necessary in order to create a single space of representation (2004: 318-9).

This paragraph shows the role and significance of ‘dislocation’, as this concept allows for the possibility of considering alternatives to the closure that antagonism causes. This concept shows the gaps and limits of the structure and the new articulations that can arise. As a second consequence, it presents the possibility of other paths of social configuration. I understand that dislocation is included in the tension of contingency and necessity. In the early work of Laclau and Mouffe, dislocation is under-theorised because of antagonism’s high relevance for the argument of hegemony and negativity. Two points need more elaboration. The first is the relation of hegemony, antagonism and dislocation within a discursive process. As explained, the logic of difference attempts to establish a discursive order with the incorporation of the opposing identities by breaking the shared equivalence in those identities. It is through the expansion of one side that the negativity decreases (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 133-4). This is the main idea that I will follow in the setting of hegemony. The consolidation of a hegemonic stance and the ‘suspension’ of antagonism mean that, in practice, a hegemonic position establishes links with the majority of groups within the field and antagonism is reduced. The inclusion of diverse identities under a main ‘accepted’ identity is the way a dominant discourse will create a consensus based on shared interests. In this way, antagonism diminishes, and a hegemonic status can be established.

In contrast, the analytical aspects that I want to address in relation to antagonism are the permanent negation of the other and the dispute over one specific signifier. Thus, the case for analysis will consider the context of having the social field sharply divided. The other point is to clarify what happens in the ‘space of representation’ to which Laclau refers. He argues that “[w]ith dislocation we have moved from the total representation inherent in the antagonistic relation to a general crisis of the space of representation, there are other types of exclusion which do not involve such a crisis and which, however, cannot be assimilated to the inclusive exclusion of antagonism either” (Laclau, 2004: 319). I understand this explanation of the prospect of looking beyond a

locked setting of antagonism. This shift opens other possibilities of identification that remained as antagonist. In this way, the event of dislocation brings other possibilities of social configuration. This corresponds not only to practices and arrangements (regime change) but also to new forms of identification or social demands. These forms or demands are the “other types of exclusion” that Laclau mentions.

This new conceptual aspect, hinted in the book chapter ‘Glimpsing the Future’ (Laclau 2004), was developed in the book *On Populist Reason*⁵¹ (2005). The path of Laclau’s conceptual body continues with the topic of the limits. Specifically, one of the most relevant issues of the book is that heterogeneity is presented as the reference to recognise the limits. Laclau exemplifies this concept with Hegel’s consideration of ‘peoples without history’ and Marx’s focus on the ‘Lumpenproletariat’ (2004: 140-8). With these social groups, Laclau exemplifies the idea of totality or full presence in the space of representation is not possible and that there is a ‘surplus’ excluded that is constitutive,

[w]hile antagonism still presupposes some sort of discursive inscription, the kind of outside that I am now discussing presupposes exteriority not just to something within a space of representation, but to the space of representation as such. I will call this type of exteriority social heterogeneity (ibid.: 140).

In this way, antagonism is one way of identification and no longer the limit. Laclau considers that a first form of heterogeneity develops when a particular social demand is not attended to or included within the system. A second type of heterogeneity develops from the relations between unfulfilled demands (2005: 107-8). This means that there can be more than one heterogeneous element within the space of representation, but the aspect of antagonism is not a determinant. The demands enacted by these elements may or may not converge, and the only relation of equivalence is that they represent the failure of the system (ibid.).

According to Lasse Thomassen, with this conceptual development, the notion of heterogeneity becomes the central category of hegemony and discourse analysis. At the same time, antagonism becomes a more nuanced possibility, and it is possible to talk about “degrees of antagonism” and “never ‘pure’ antagonisms” (2005: 209). From a general perspective, the content of *On Populist Reason* (e.g. relation of populism,

⁵¹ As the very first sentence of the Preface explains, “The main issue addressed in this book is the nature and logics of the formation of collective identities” (Laclau, 2005: ix). For a (very) critical assessment of this book, see: S. Žižek, (2006), ‘Against the Populist Temptation’, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 551-574. For Laclau’s reply to Žižek, see: ‘Why constructing a ‘People’ is the main task of Radical Politics’ *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Summer 2006), pp. 646-680.

representation, democracy or the ‘populist variations’) connects with Mouffe’s work on radical democracy and agonism.⁵² I see that, after the re-conceptualisation of antagonism as a limit, discourse theory needed a new reference to explain the possibility of social configurations beyond antagonism, and heterogeneity offers other possibilities that may explain other stances (e.g. agonistic politics).

The aspect of heterogeneity that I propose to contextualise is to consider a moment of dislocation and then follow how the new element proceeds to show the limits and contradictions of the identities related. Following Laclau’s understanding, a group pursuing a social demand can be regarded as a heterogeneous element that embodies the limit of the social space. As Thomassen explains, “[T]he heterogeneous does not simply disappear from the discourse. The existence of these heterogeneous elements shows the ultimate contingency of the constitution of an identity or a discourse, including antagonistic identities and discourses” (2005:301). In this way, I propose to contextualise the heterogeneous element to show contingency along with the dynamics of hegemony and antagonism. In each analytical chapter, I will explain the concrete aspects of these concepts that are considered for the contextualisation of the settings.

2.9 Social objectivity and articulation

The ontological argument followed by the differential understanding of the system or structure are reflected in the possibilities of having access to reality and the dynamics that shape the articulation of discourses. The rejection of essentialism within the social points to a necessary intervention to configure and construct the subject and its understanding of social reality. As mentioned in the introduction, by social objectivity, Laclau and Mouffe mean social reality. Objectivity, thus, includes the processes, ideas, practices, structures and actors that are involved in any conceptualisation of social reality. As Laclau explains, “[O]bjectivity—the being of objects—is nothing but the sedimented form of power, in other words a power whose traces have been erased” (1990:60).

The above quotation accurately reflects the level of abstraction and analytical depth of discourse theory and includes a central idea: “sedimented form of power”. I will later further discuss the point of ‘the being of the objects’ because I consider that the concept is exactly what reflects the tension between contingency and necessity. Political practices simultaneously establish and weaken the discourses and the identities. In this sense,

⁵² Mouffe’s proposition of shifting from antagonism (enemy) to agonism (adversary) demands a different conceptualisation of antagonism (2000: 149).

discourse is considered as constitutive of the social (Foucault 1972, Laclau and Mouffe 2001, Jørgensen and Phillips, op. cit.: 145).⁵³ It also states that any conceptual form cannot capture the complete essence of the object (Laclau and Mouffe 1987). As I noted before, discourse theory takes the structuralist explanation about the relational and differential feature that constitutes those elements, and, at the same time, following Derrida, it questions the ‘systematicity’ or ‘structurality’ of the centre pointing out that meaning is immersed in an indefinite play of signification or difference (Derrida, 1978: 280). In this way, all the ontological, systemic and theoretical arguments lead to the ‘practical’ but crucial aspect of the fixation of meaning. The famous Laclau and Mouffe’s definition of discourse and articulation establish crucial lines of thought,

we will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse (op.cit.:105)

I want to underline that this quotation points to the fact that the structured totality is contingent. Laclau and Mouffe’s discussion about the ‘openness of the social’, as previously quoted, is another way to see this. Regarding this definition, discourse theory explains that certain elements (signifiers) are placed in ‘moments’ (temporal, meaningful contexts); ‘nodal points’ are privileged and referential signifiers in which the discourse tries to connect diverse signifiers to create an ensemble in which ‘chains of equivalence’ will unify the discursive attempt (ibid.: 105-114). As I previously wrote, meaning and identity as well as the relations between different agents via discourses necessarily involve the exercise of power (Dyrberg, 1997). This feature affects the rest of the elements that constitute any account of social ‘reality’. One way to understand discourses is to consider them as systems of social relations and practices that political intervention has permeated since their establishment (Howarth, 2000: 9). This means that discourses are the result of an intervention that assigned meaning and that has achieved stabilisation. This situation is precisely when the ‘traces’ seem to be absent.

The following point to explain concerns the possibility of articulating a discourse in a setting of incompleteness and different foundations. Laclau and Mouffe distinguish between the infinitude (contingency) and the finitude (necessity) of a discourse. It is important to differentiate between ‘contingent elements’ in a discursive field and ‘necessary moments’ in a particular discourse. The latter are partial fixations of social meaning, while the former represents a wider field of meaning in which a ‘surplus of meaning’ provided by a specific discourse keeps the field open for opposition. The pre-

⁵³ On page 97, I will present a figure from Jørgensen and Phillips’s book explaining different approaches to discourse and their understanding of how the social is constituted.

eminence of the political makes clear why there is a temporary fixation of meaning and why a senseless free-play is avoided (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit: 103-4).

My next aim is to clarify some aspects and concepts that are involved in discursive dynamics. In the case of a hegemonic articulation, one basic manoeuvre is to create and consolidate nodal points for the development of the discourse. This is explained in *HSS* in this manner,

The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 113 emphasis in original)

The above citation includes significant concepts that I will use in the analysis. Articulation involves the attachment of signifiers that will constitute an intelligible unit. Nodal points are privileged signifiers that construct a chain. The signifiers are those ‘necessary moments’ structuring a discourse. A hegemonic articulation promotes a specific objectivity as ‘neutral’ or suggests that the meaning and practice are naturalised and accepted (ibid.: 112). This is the grounding moment in which that specific objectivity establishes a centre around which all practices, meanings and identities are organised. An additional explanation is that, as Jørgensen and Phillips correctly note, the concept of discourse replaces ‘structure’ in the sense that the former “refers to a structuring of signs in relation to one another” (2002: 20).

The notion of field of discursivity, and specifically the discursive, are of paramount significance to my work. The field of discursivity remains open but at the same time delimits a particular discourse. It represents the possibility and impossibility of any social objectivity (Nabers, op. cit.: 110). In line with this, the concept of the discursive, or in this dissertation, *discursivity*, will be adapted for my analytical concerns. According to Laclau and Mouffe, “[T]he discursive is not . . . an object among other objects (although, of course concrete discourses are) but rather a theoretical horizon” (1987: 86). More precisely, Howarth and Stavrakakis define it as “a theoretical horizon within which the being of objects is constituted” (2000: 3). My adaptation takes discursivity as a level of analysis that comes about in different forms of articulation and identity formation. This means focusing on the analytical level where the ‘being of the objects’ is fixed based on meaning. Therefore, discursivity⁵⁴ is a central concept that factors into how I link the

⁵⁴ I consider that my adaptation of the analytical level complements Laclau and Mouffe’s conceptualisation of *field of discursivity*. The explanation is that “[i]t determines...the necessarily discursive character of any object and the impossibility of any given discourse to implements a final suture” (2001: 111).

theoretical considerations of discourse theory with the way I will read the visions of social objectivity that different actors articulate. This level of analysis is used to focus on the constitution of meaning.

Regarding the articulation of signifiers, there are two more references to distinguish *floating* and *empty signifiers*. Some confusion may arise due to the closeness of the concepts and because Laclau and Mouffe do not specifically define them. This explanation details the differences, “Floating signifiers are the signs that different discourses struggle to invest with meaning in their own particular way. Nodal points are floating signifiers, but whereas the term ‘nodal point’ refers to a point of crystallization within a specific discourse, the term ‘floating signifier’ belongs to the ongoing struggle between different discourses to fix the meaning of important signs” (Jørgensen and Phillips, op.cit.:28). Floating signifiers, hence, appear in a context of antagonism wherein views in opposition use the same signifier according to their interests. These signifiers have different meanings according to the context that is immersed (Nabers, op.cit.:117). This distinct articulation is the one stressed by discourse theory because it changes the scope and identity of the elements within a discourse. Hence, floating signifiers appear in a context of antagonism wherein views in opposition use the same signifier according to their interests. These signifiers have different meanings according to the context in which they are immersed (ibid). This distinct articulation is the one stressed by discourse theory because it changes the scope and identity of the elements within a discourse.

‘Empty signifier’ is a more abstract concept that intends to show the limits of a social field. The investment that is included and excluded in the signifier marks the border of the account of social objectivity. According to Laclau (1996: 37), an empty signifier appears if there is a structural impossibility and only if this represents an interruption (dislocation) of the sign. Laclau also uses this concept to engage in a discussion about the universal and particular dichotomy. The relation of hegemonic practices and an empty signifier is explained in this way, “The theory of hegemony tries to show how within a system of differences the filling of the empty signifier becomes a fight about the institution of a frontier, which, at the same time, produces a ‘constitutive outside’ that threatens the systematicity of the system” (Stäheli, 2003: 9). What becomes evident from these issues is that an empty signifier is related to hegemonic practices that try to ‘fill it’ with specific meaning and identity. This would be the typical particular stance presented as universal. This signifier also represents the limits of the project and the space of representation. Empty signifiers are also related to the political construction of identity because they represent part of what is lacking in the identity of a group (Howarth, 2013: 250).

2.10 The incomplete subject and the political aspect of social identities

Laclau's explanation of identity considers that, "relations never succeed in totally absorbing the identity of every element. Each element has a surplus of meaning because it cannot be located in a closed system of difference. And at the same time, no identity is ever definitely and definitively acquired" (1998: 254). In this sense, exterior elements that keep discourse and identities contingent determine every account of social objectivity. It is necessary to acknowledge that, in discourse theory, the signifier (e.g. world peace) and the subject are regarded as having an 'identity'. The relations of difference and equivalence affect both. Hence, this term conveys the subject's multiple social roles and/or ideological allegiance along with the meaning invested in the signifiers. In addition, in the case of the subject, it implies that identities have an inner political origin when they are performed through interactions within a social space or formation.

The understanding of subjectivity in discourse theory has the same ontological arguments that have previously been detailed. In consequence, a pure essence grounding and determining the subject is firmly rejected. Still, there are different views on the status of the subject. In social and political theories, the 'human nature' is a central question in the ordering of systems and institutions. Theorists focusing on the social contract have identified a self-contained, rational and a priori being who performs a voluntary act of political contract. For liberalists, human essence entails free will and individual sovereignty (Daly, 2002). On the contrary, the poststructuralist account of subjectivity benefits from the ideas of Althusser, Foucault, and Lacan,⁵⁵ which consider the situational position and constitution of the subject in relation to ideology, discourse, power, language and the unconscious. These ideas started with the process of decentring the Cartesian subject and questioning the theories that endorsed foundational thinking on this issue (Ashe, 1999: 90-3). Laclau and Mouffe's account of subjectivity developed from Althusser's ideas. For Althusser, the ideological practices are embedded in social structures, and both issues determine the formation of the subject. The main critique is the autonomy attributed to ideological practices in comparison to political and economic practices besides the constitutive capacity of the ideological practices. This critical assessment highlights the deterministic view of the role of ideology and the structure. The system of differences is the primary reference to explain how an element

⁵⁵ For an 'assessment' of Lacan's influence, see: Glynos and Stavrakakis 2004.

obtains its identity. In *HSS*, the account of subjectivity involves “decentred subject positions” (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 87).

The process of identification will define the position of the subject in relation to others. In this sense, the task is to understand how subjects take part in diverse discursive formations, place themselves in a formation and relate to other discourses. This means that in regard to the openness of identity, “this field of identities which never manage to be fully fixed, is the field of overdetermination”⁵⁶ (ibid.: 111). Overdetermination is seen as that excess or lack that permits the partial fixity of identities. It is necessary to understand the ideas of the subject and subjectivity in discourse theory, in *HSS*, the subject is viewed as unable to be the origin of social relations, and the ‘transcendental subject’ is rejected as well (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 115-122). In other words, the subject is decentred but still highly determined by the structure.

A new account of subjectivity was developed when the notion of ‘lack’ was incorporated. This notion was a definitive influence on Laclau’s account of subjectivity⁵⁷ and identity. As explained before in the sections on post-foundational thinking, by placing lack at the heart of politics, Laclau and Mouffe’s account is based on the recognition of the failure of the unification of subject and object, language and word, and, thus, the impossibility to achieve a complete moment of transcendence (Tormey and Townshed, 2006: 8). The idea of lack implies the impossibility for the subject to develop a permanent identity. The problem of representation starts in the early stages of the subject’s constitution (the Lacanian mirror-image process of self-identification); on the other hand, the ‘outside’, the signifier of the socio-political order, fails to provide a full identity for the subject. This means that there is a ‘split’ in the identification and representation process that affects the subject’s identity. The representation level contains the ideological-symbolic and formal political frame in which the subject identifies order and identifies or rejects it (ibid.: 101).

The other two topics that I consider relevant for the analysis are the political aspect of social identities and the constitution of collective identities. I consider that the most interesting component of Laclau’s perspective on subjectivity is his framing of ‘social identities’ as political. In *New Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time*, Laclau argues, “Our thesis is that the constitution of social identity is an act of power and that identity as such *is* power” (1990: 31). In this way, talking about political subjectivity conveys that

⁵⁶ This follows Althusser’s use of this concept to some degree.

⁵⁷ This stance on subjectivity came with the criticisms of Žižek (in Laclau, 1990: 249-260). Afterwards, Laclau refers to Jacques Lacan’s work in all of the issues related to subjectivity.

any sort of identification has a political origin insofar as it is taken within the realm of the social (Laclau and Zac, 1994). I see this idea as a 'logical' extension of the argument that the political always affects the social and any element that is constituted within it. This is also because a discursive structure provides a frame for the identity of the subject, and, as seen in discourse theory's arguments, these structures are always an act of power.

Laclau (1994: 3-4) argues that there is a distinction between identity and identification. The lack demands an act of identification, and this is when the political aspect of identity is 'activated'. Let us remember that any decision to act is considered to occur in a "radical undecidability"; thus, the act of decision is constantly demanded (Laclau, [1993a] 1996: 92). For Laclau and Mouffe, consequently, political subjectivity refers to the acts of the social agents. The idea of a constitutive outside is again the leading argument to discuss incomplete, 'precarious' and nomadic identities, considering the significance of the relational and contextual aspects that constitute any social identity (Mouffe 1994: 104). Consequently, Laclau argues that collective identities are constituted because they are not linked essentially to any collective imaginary and therefore, they retain ambiguities and limitations. There are no a priori collective identities and self-transparent discourses (1990: 65). In other words, identities are immersed in the struggle of what cannot be symbolised (Žižek 1990: 249).

The specific aspect that will be considered in my analysis is the way collective identities are mirrored with the specific features that each of the three conceptual settings offers. In other words, the analysis will show how the "we" takes position in the field, who the other is and how their interrelation occurs. The main issue is to understand how the collective identity either tries to cover and form a whole identity or the ways it is mirrored with the antagonist.

2.11 Imaginaries and myths / The universal and the particular

Myths and social imaginaries, as proposed by Laclau,⁵⁸ are the last concepts and topics that I consider relevant for analysing the accounts of social objectivity. Both concepts increase the analytical depth of discourse theory into a dimension that is not normally considered by theories in political issues. I am referring to the setting of a full constitution within the discursive dimension. The preceding conceptual reference of myth and imaginary is dislocation. Laclau argues that one of the situations resulting

⁵⁸ When developing his own conceptualisation, Laclau does not refer to other thinkers (e.g. Lacan or Castoriadis) who have also used the concept of 'imaginary'.

from a moment or event of dislocation is that the forms of identification coming from this moment need a point of convergence.

According to Laclau, after a dislocation, one crucial point to consider is the consolidation of the developing myth. 'Myth' is defined in the following way, "[a] space of representation which bears no relation of continuity with the dominant 'structural objectivity. Myth is thus a principle of reading a given situation whose terms are external to what is representable in the objective spatiality constituted by the given structure'" (Laclau, 1990: 61). Myths are used to put together a new space of representation, and its effectiveness is key for the construction of hegemony. I understand that the "new mythical space of representation" is a whole vision of objectivity that competes with the previously dominant objectivity. It includes the social demands that made the dislocation aiming to dominate the space of representation. Myth is constitutive of any possible society (ibid.: 62-7) and is the factor that restores certainty to the social field; thus, it can be considered as a foundation (e.g. peace, security). However, as a surface of inscription, (the inclusion of social demands and forms of identification) a myth is incomplete. This is because "their content is constantly reconstituted and displaced" (ibid.: 63). Laclau's argument considers that in a further consolidation of the account of social objectivity, the myth reaches the status of 'social imaginary'. In other words, the 'mythical' stage after a dislocation implies that the project was successful in achieving recognition and a permanent status. Laclau considers an imaginary as "[h]orizon: it is not one among other objects but an absolute limit which structures a field of intelligibility and is the condition of possibility for the emergence of any object" (ibid.: 64).

In this explanation, Laclau points to the modes of representation that contain and express the teleological dimension of a vision of social objectivity. An imaginary appears as a 'very advanced' stage of hegemony. This stage, then, includes a comprehensive institutionalisation of practices and identities. On one side, the practices go through a process of sedimentation. In this process, the existing practices are legitimised and adapted because they are accepted. On the other side (ideological), even the discourse constructs images of perfect closure to reinforce the hegemonic position; these images will remain in an illusory condition (Laclau, 1996b). Social imaginaries imply that the naturalisation of the meaning fixated to relevant signifiers is full and that counter-hegemonic (antagonist) articulations are (momentarily) concealed. Aletta Norval has noticed certain positive aspects and limitations of the concepts (2000: 227-8). Considering hegemony construction as a process, the conceptual difference of myth and imaginary allows the observation of the shifts between these two possibilities. However, Norval argues that there can be competing myths in the same socio-political

space that may contend to become the dominant imaginary at the same time, but it is not clear if this is possible for imaginaries.

Laclau argues that a myth offers certainty after a disruptive event. Myth is a space of representation in which an event of dislocation is absorbed. Following this understanding, I consider that myths help in the transition from a previous configuration that failed into a new space of representation in which there is a constitution of a new set of goals and foundations. For the discussion presented, the relevant point is that myths may develop into social imaginaries. In my analysis, I will consider myths as the foundations that are established as the base of the accounts of social objectivity and imaginaries as the possibility of fulfilment. Therefore, myths set the ground from which and imaginaries appear as the ultimate supplement for any account of social objectivity that contends for a dominant position. For Laclau, imaginaries can be regarded as horizon that provides a specific dimension to an account of social objectivity. The analysis and discussion of myths and imaginaries in discourse theory helps to see the contingent character of any social space or formation; even an imaginary seems to be immutable or unchangeable, and its destabilization is possible due to the subversion that new myths can produce (ibid.: 226). In other words, any political project includes a stage where all the demands will be fulfilled. This stage can be regarded as a ‘moment of closure’.

This last discussion pertains to the paradox of the universal and the particular. Laclau, for instance, considers the following, “[C]hristian millennium, the Enlightenment and positivism's conception of progress, communist society are all imaginaries: as modes of representation of the very form of fullness, they are located beyond the precariousness and dislocations typical of the world of objects” (1990: 64). This quotation directly refers to the topic of the universal/particular that is related to identities and imaginaries within any political project. The most significant part to which Laclau refers is the paradoxical relation between the universal and the particular. The ontological argument about the lack and rejection of essences makes the universal an empty space that is filled with particular demands (Laclau, 1996a: 56-7). He identifies and questions the historical forms that have conceptualised the universal-particular relation. Historically, the central approaches have pointed to the clear distinction between two options and to the rationalisation embodied in a certain type of subjectivity. Laclau rejects ‘pure particularism’ (because of the impossibility of being isolated) and the opposite, full universalism (because of the risk of transcending all particularisms into a single entity) (ibid.: 19-32).

Laclau discusses the logic of incarnation that has existed in the modern thinking and refers to the “[...] *privileged agent of history*, the agent whose particular body was the

expression of universality transcending it” (1990: 23 emphasis in original). In the previous section, I mentioned that a “transcendental subject” is rejected in discourse theory. Rather, in post-structural theory, the aspects to think about are the fluid and multiple possibilities of identification and that the universal and particular are mutually dependent, opposed and in permanent tension, Laclau asserts that “the relation between particularity and universality is an essentially unstable and undecidable one” (ibid.: 14). The topic of the universal/particular has factored into scholarly debates (Butler et al., 2000; Gashé, 2004; Norval, 2004a; Zerilli, 2004) and in poststructuralism (Newman, 2005 Ch. 8, 2007). In regard to this concern, Laclau declares the following, “*The universal is an empty place, a void which can be filled only by the particular, but which, through its very emptiness, produces a series of crucial effects in the structuration/destructuration of social relations*” (2000:58 emphasis in original).

For my analytical concern, the significant aspect of the paradox is its relation to hegemonic struggles when different identities are aligned or superseded in the name of a universal stance as well as the way social imaginaries are discursively represented in reference to this paradox. Any vision of social objectivity that claims the universal needs a hegemonic chain of differences. The paradox of the universal/particular is relevant because it appears when the socio-political projects offering accounts of organisation appeal to the transcendental dimension of the project trying to “fill the content of the universal”, which is when politics are seen (Dyberg, 2005: 242). My interest in the analysis is to show how the paradox takes place in the discourses and representations that will be reviewed and its relation to imaginaries. I am referring to those (political) calls where social antagonism seems to be controlled in the social field.

2.12 Overview

As shown, Laclau and Mouffe’s conceptual edifice has considerable complexity with many levels and theoretical units that interrelate and come after one another. Therefore, this chapter has an introductory and explanatory feature that tries to link discourse theory to the field of Peace and Conflict Research. All the explanations aim to outline the conceptual possibilities that discourse theory offers.

In this section, I make an overview of the most relevant concepts that will be considered in the analysis. Firstly, it is necessary to acknowledge the ontological perspective that questions the essence and possibility of the full constitution of subjects and structures within the social. Post-foundational thinking opens the social through the political and offers a more complex picture of the structures, subjects and the

discursive dimension of the social. Discussing ontologies, on the other hand, implicates an anti-essentialist stance where meaning is a core issue to consider. This resonates with Judith Butler's point about the need to think through "contingent foundations" (1992). This remains a way of thinking that is overlooked in Peace and Conflict Research. In conceptual and practical terms, we face the situation of different attempts to define peace instead of proposing 'the definitive version of peace'. In words of Johan Galtung, "[A]t this point, of course, nobody has any monopoly on defining 'peace'" (1969: 167).

By rejecting an essential element constituting any subject or structure, a completely different scenario stands for the analytical endeavour. This 'ontological rupture' in social and political theorising is barely considered in this field of study. This is the first point of reference that I addressed in the introduction. The situation of different foundations contending for a central position presents the opportunity to analyse configurations that consider antagonism, hegemony and heterogeneity. These three settings attempt to show a particular discursive configuration when actors compete to stabilise and fix the contingencies of the social and demonstrate the ways this practice entails the creation of social order from a diversity of elements.

As detailed in Section 2.7, the logics of equivalence and difference explain the ways the elements interrelate in any structural arrangement, and these logics show the resulting social configuration of identity and discourse. Following this argument, the issues of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity are contextualised as conceptual settings that indicate a specific discursive configuration. Considering a context of hegemony, a chain of differences seeks to unify all the social identities within the social field. This process moves any source of antagonism (equivalences) to the margins of the field. Therefore, in the analysis, the aims are to see how different social groups form the chain and to investigate how the hegemonic intervention attempts to offer stability to the identities involved. In the case of antagonism, the aspect that is significant is the 'border' dividing the field. The division is where the inclusion and exclusion form identities. The setting of heterogeneity conveys a dislocation that reconfigures identity. In all of these cases, the critical approach is to expose the assumptions of subjectivity that tend to essentialise and proclaim a 'transcendental historic' identity. In each of the settings, I will study how the logics of difference and/or equivalence occur and how the accounts of social objectivity are constructed.

To address this concern, I briefly summarise the concepts that will be used. My first intervention is to consider social objectivity as a broader vision or account of how a space or socio-political project is (or should be) organised. In this way, objectivity is the historical outcome of articulation, or, Laclau's terms, it is a 'sedimented discourse' (Jørgensen and Phillips, op. cit.: 36). In this abstraction, I propose a consideration of a

practical side, which I refer to as the accounts of social and political organisation. In this way, I have a macro level as a background to address different actors and discourses (Glynos et al., 2009: 34). Discursivity, then, is what I call the level of analysis in which the being of the objects or subjects is constructed. In this level, I problematise the accounts of social objectivity happening in the settings. Therefore, the settings and research material are reviewed from a contextual perspective not from the 'strictly factual'.

In the practicalities of the analysis, I will point out the articulation of signifiers, (nodal points, empty and floating signifiers) and issues of collective identity. The final aspect that I will also take into consideration is the use of myth and imaginaries. In the study of hegemony, the teleological dimension of the formation contains references to myth and imaginaries to legitimise the accounts of social objectivity. I understand myths as a sort of foundation of the account of social objectivity, while the imaginary is the projected outcome that can, or will be, achieved. The constant struggle to establish a centre involves this dimension of fulfilment and the paradox of the universal and the particular. Discourse theory is certainly a challenging perspective due to the level of abstraction, profound explanations and significant number of concepts. Nevertheless, it is my contention that the conceptual discussions and analysis are more comprehensive because of the complexity and openness of discourse theory.

3 THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF THE TEXT AND REPRESENTATION

What I call "text" implies all the structures called "real," "economic," "historical," socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents. Another way of recalling once again that "there is nothing outside the text"

Jacques Derrida

Society never manages to be identical to itself, as every nodal point is constituted within an intertextuality that overflows it

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe

In this chapter, I develop the point of reference related to the argument advanced by poststructuralism about the political dimension of the text and representation. This chapter aims to situate the importance and relation of discourse, representation, power and the analytical angles that poststructuralism offer. I will illustrate the critical aspects that poststructuralist thinking considers while addressing the issue of representation. This discussion follows some of discourse theory basic theoretical and analytical concerns and it complements the previous chapter

The first topic is the question of representation through a poststructuralist perspective which brings to the fore the politics behind this question. As presented in chapter 2, the criticisms develop because the presence and the essence are deemed as incomplete and contingent by any anti-essentialist perspective. Nevertheless, there are different understandings and tensions within poststructuralism about representation. Afterwards, the following issue is to introduce the 'Derridean' perspective with some key concepts (of metaphysics of presence, logocentrism, and deconstruction) that will allow to address the meaning and the accounts of social objectivity. This frame will lead to the explanations about the 'textual' feature that underpins the perspectives that stress the importance of the interventions fixating meaning. The sections about textuality represent a bridge between the theoretical references and the strategies that I will use in the analysis. Specifically, the notions of textuality and intertextuality are key concepts to consider the issue of representation and its political aspect. To conclude the chapter, the strategic and practical relation of deconstruction, discourse, textuality and

discursivity are explained. These issues start the transition on the practicalities of the analysis and methods.

3.1 The question of representation

By following ontological and theoretical perspectives that reject fullness and ‘natural’ essences, social and political inquiries require serious considerations of the process to address social objectivity. I have explained the significant attention that discourse theory directs towards the interventions that assign meaning and the attempts to naturalise what is included and excluded in a signifier and, therefore, in a discourse. This stance implies a move to a more problematic context wherein the ‘transparency’ of meaning is challenged. In order to analyse images and written sources as research material, it is first necessary to discuss the political dimension and implications of these constructions.

In the introduction, I included a general comment on the diverse ‘strands’ of poststructuralism that followed the works of Deleuze, Derrida and Foucault and the contrasting positions on immanence/transcendence, abundance/lack and autonomy/hegemony. If we apply Derrida’s thinking on presence and *différance*, then,

Representation can never be the simple repetition of a pure and present (unproblematic and transparent) origin. Instead, it must always rely on the constitutive spatiality (difference as apartness and separation) and temporality (difference as delay and postponement) of the world (Clark, 2003: 154).

Discourse theory follows Derrida’s argument that discourse, meaning and/or representation are constitutive of social reality. In terms of representation, we must consider that “there is no single poststructuralist politics of representation, but poststructuralist agree that the question of representation is important to politics” (Thomassen, 2017: 540-1). Thus, discourse theory uses the transcendence-lack-hegemony trilogy as a base to develop a critical reading of meaning and representation. Laclau discusses “*failed transcendence*”, which implies the argument that the social is organised around a constitutive lack (2005: 244). The hegemonic dimension referred to in discourse theory is the attempt to organise the social. When contingency exposes the intervention assigning meaning, it is necessary to consider power. Many of the perspectives referring to discourse follow Foucault’s take on power. The Foucauldian concept of power/knowledge is crystallised in that power is responsible for creating the social world and the particular ways a person understands it. To address any statement or vision of the world, it is necessary to do so from the basis of its value and not from the basis of what is regarded as truth (Foucault, 1972). It is in this constant dynamic of

power, as a productive but constraining force, where objects and events are mediated through meaning, obtain individual characteristics and establish relations among them (Jørgensen and Phillips, op. cit.: 13-4).

In the case of representation, I consider that the strategic point is to consider the constitution and the limits of an 'incomplete representation'. One useful reference is to think in terms of the politics of representation (Shapiro, 1988) to highlight the ways any meaningful expression, discourse, representation, image or document takes part in a political play. Poststructuralist theories that address social and political issues aim to expose this aspect of the fixation of meaning and its political consequences, particularly considering the inherent contingent character of these expressions. From this theoretical view, the naturalisation of a 'neutral' term is the result of the concealment of power relations that reinforce the maintenance of certain borders of meaning (Smith, 1998: 160-1). The politics of representation conveys the consideration that language is not as unbiased medium; rather it is a kind of practice that involves a political side (Shapiro, 1988: 11). This stance considers that language works through representation; the process of representation involves the creation of meanings. It is through language and culture that a representational system takes place with the production and circulation of meaning (Hall, 1997: 5-6). From this perspective, it is necessary to consider that the fixation of meaning or representation has an epistemological dimension. Practices of representation (e.g. language, images, signs, and texts) generate and mediate meaning. They are never a 'pure reflection' of an objective truth (Shapiro, 1981, as cited in Shim, 2014: 17). In epistemological terms, the consequence is that "[r]epresentations become constitutive of what is being represented -with the effect that we are only able to know things by virtue of their representation" (Shim, op. cit., 17).⁵⁹

On this concern, there are some 'seminal' works⁶⁰ based on poststructuralist tenets that addressed the discursive production and representation of the 'other' (Campbell, 1992; Doty, 1996; Shapiro, 1998). In these works, the analysis exposed the political intervention that defines identity, the binaries that ground identity and the corresponding practices and discourse. The encounters between two poles clarify the constitutive power of discourse when the 'North' defines the 'South' (Doty, 1996: 2). For instance, the practices of a major power in world politics (e.g. the U.S. foreign policy) are based on the institutionalisation of a binary distinction of identity and a discourse that justifies certain actions. To achieve a core national interest such as security, the discourses are grounded in defining danger (Iraq in Campbell, 1992 or

⁵⁹ David Shim cites Laclau (2005) and Frank Ankersmit (1996), *Aesthetic politics: Political philosophy beyond fact and value*. Stanford University.

⁶⁰ These works are mostly in IR.

Guatemala in Shapiro, 1988) as external to the primary identity of a social space. Other analyses based on poststructural thinking warn of the situations of conflict that are represented in the media (Campbell, 2007). The analytical concern is that taken-for-granted issues, such as ‘ethnicity’ or ‘identity’, are essentialised, and this situation blurs the complexities of the conflicts.

The question of representation is relevant to this dissertation for two reasons. Firstly, representation and discourse are seen from their constitutive feature rather than only from its communicative side (Shapiro, 1988: 12). In this way, attention is directed towards the practices of representation and the intervention that makes some things visible and other excluded. Thus, meaning, representation and knowledge are bound to power and politics. In the representation of something, certain elements are privileged over others that are excluded or criticised (Shim, op. cit.: 16-7). In this sense, the ‘constitutive feature’ of discourse is the main line for argumentation. Secondly, I consider representation as a place of intervention and difference. In terms of analysis, the point is to question what is represented, and the aim is to normalise certain meanings. As Michael Shapiro argues, “[R]epresentations do not imitate reality but are the practices through which things take on meaning and value; to the extent that a representation is regarded as realistic, it is because it is so familiar it operates transparently” (Shapiro, 1988: xi). The last part of this quote resonates with the Laclau and Mouffe’s arguments about hegemony. The naturalisation of representation is one issue that will be addressed in the settings of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity.

3.1.1 Addressing the visuals

The other relevant issue in my work is the use of visual representations. In the study of social and political questions, images are considered as a place in which power is constitutive (Bleiker, 2009; Fyfe and Law, 1988; Hansen, 2011; Rose, 2012; Shim, 2014; Sturken and Cartwright, 2001). In the visualisation of social reality, it is also necessary to understand the ways visuals are used and their implication in specific processes that are political (Stocchetti and Kukkonen, 2011). In line with the previous arguments, images are sites of struggle, imposition and dissent. From a visual perspective, the aim is to understand the manoeuvres that attempt to give legitimacy to the ideas included in the representation. In the case of scientific and academic practices, the visual is linked to the reaffirmation of a certain reality of the social or natural worlds (Law and Whittaker, 1988). The matter of legitimacy is a fundamental feature to consider. One

issue related to legitimacy is the effect that images have. Images are a unique medium to evoke, appeal and generate emotions (Bleiker, 2018a: 9).

For addressing the visuals under the perspective advocated, it is necessary to consider that “[h]ow images are political in the most fundamental sense; they delineate what we, as collectives, see and what we don’t and thus, by extension, how politics is perceived, sensed, framed, articulated, carried out and legitimised” (Bleiker, 2017: 4). For instance, the politics of visual representation have been studied in cases of armed conflict and/or humanitarian crises (Campbell on famine 2003, 2007, 2011; Hutchinson et al., 2014; Möller, 2010 on Rwanda). In these cases, the point at stake is that the conflicts are mediated and understood through the visual register (photos) that are available with the risk of getting only a partial view of the conflict. In this way, one of the main concerns when addressing issues of visual representation is “to examine in detail how certain institutions mobilise specific forms of visibility to see, and to order, the world. If one dominant visibility denies the validity of other ways of representing social difference...” (Rose, 2012: 10). I presented the arguments that the discursive and interpretative stances point to the productivity of the representation. In other words, I will consider how visual politics (Bleiker, 2018a; Shim, 2014) works in the representations that appear in the research material. Parallel to the concerns of authenticity and objectivity (e.g. photography), the main issue to consider is that images represent the world according to a specific opinion. Hence, a significant matter for the issue of visual politics, or the politics of the images, is the exclusion or inclusion of elements that establish boundaries and differences (Bleiker, 2018a: 11-23).

One of the most significant issues concerning studies on visual culture is the ways images present social difference or make it invisible. For instance, social categories such as class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality are embedded in images (Cuevas Valenzuela, 2008; Rose, op. cit.: 11-2). However, the critical stance considers that a depiction is a material representation that has achieved stability and that it is a site through which social difference is constructed. In this case, difference implies the inclusion and exclusion of elements as well as their hierarchical organisation (Fyfe and Law, 1988: 1-2). The aspect of difference appears in the images when subjectivities or institutional relations facilitate the determination of patterns or stereotypes. This is linked with representation practices and the formation of knowledge (Rose, 2012).

In the way I developed this dissertation, it was not possible to address the ‘viewer’ perspective to which the previous statements refer. Instead, I focus on what is invested in the visual and not in the consequences of them. Undeniably, this is an important aspect of the analysis of images that this dissertation does not include. This issue would have changed the focus and concern of this work to a great extent. However, in regard

to the social effects that images have, the analysis includes some critical thoughts of how social difference occurs visually. Nonetheless, I focus on expanding the critical argument of questioning the objectivity of the image and underline that images are dependent on the context through which they have been produced and exposed. Under this perspective, images become a form of knowledge in which reality is framed as an unproblematic natural. In the analytical task, I will pay attention on the manoeuvres to stabilise the meaning that makes certain understandings available while excluding others—namely, visual politics. Because of this, I am not evaluating whether the images portray complete objectivity or how ‘truthful’ the discourses and visual representations are. This conveys a ruling out of the consideration of normativity within the images. As William Mitchell explains, “[T]he question of what role image play in politics can thus not be settled by arriving at a set of values and then proceeding to the evaluating of images” (2018: 232). In the images that will be studied, my aim is to expose how objectivity is established and presented as a structure and to identify the strategic movements that give validity to this objectivity. As I mentioned in the introduction, the visual aspect proved influential when I investigated different actors’ claims of social objectivity. These claims included notions of social and political issues that were exposed through visual elements. This is the reason for my interest in the visual aspect that comes with the discursive articulation of any account of social objectivity.

Concerning this interest, I take advantage of the ‘methodological openness’ of discourse theory to address any meaningful element. This situation enables the inclusion of all sorts of research material. For example, in the case of posters, drawings and illustrations, the symbolism fused with the ‘real’ makes the image more interesting. From a discursive perspective, I consider that the mix of concrete statements with mythical representations becomes a more relevant issue to analyse. The explanations of the specific methods for the images are presented in the next chapter.

3.2 The textual turn

Poststructuralism is related to some specific ‘turns’ that influenced social and political theories in a definitive manner. In this way, the hermeneutic, interpretative, textual, discursive (Howarth, 2000), visual (Mirzoeff, 1998) and aesthetic turns (Bleiker, 2001, 2009) share a questioning of language as a ‘transparent- medium’. These turns represented a major breakdown of positivist thinking of the social world. A general background for the poststructuralist perspective can be traced to the linguistic turn that started in philosophy. This was introduced to social issues through the theoretical

developments based on structuralism and language (Glendinning, 2004). The linguistic turn underlined the inseparable relation of language and the human understanding of the world (Bleiker, 2009: 31). This questioned the possible separation between ‘object’ and ‘subject’. The impact of this thinking also influenced the epistemological debates within the fields of study that engaged in social and political issues (Finlayson, 1999). It can be considered that discourse brought a wider, yet complex dimension to the concerns about language. Among all these ‘turns’, the one that is most relevant for this work is the one related to the feature of *textuality*.

By following poststructural arguments, the textual characteristic of discourse theory recognises that any element (action, structure or agent) is necessarily mediated with meaning. This stance gives an account of Derrida’s famous statement, “*il n’y a pas de hors-texte*” ([1976] 1997: 158), translated in English by Gayatri Spivak as “there is no outside-text” (and also as “there is nothing outside of the text”). This expression can be interpreted, beyond its hyperbolic sense, as “[...] there is no place outside the discourse that can remain untouched by it and is able to define its order” (Åkerstrøm Andersen, op. cit.: 51). In other words, it is not possible to ‘step out of meaning’ and have a full account of objectivity. The textual is a decisive reference for this dissertation because it defines the status of the research material studied. Derrida’s understanding of text is clear: “[W]hat I call ‘text’ implies all the structures called ‘real’, ‘economic’, ‘historical’, socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents” (1988: 148).

In discourse theory, textuality implies a methodological consideration. The point is to read any research material as ‘texts’ and to focus on the meaning that has been invested. For instance, David Howarth explains the status of research material under discourse theory, “[D]iscourse analysis refers to the process of analysing signifying practices as discursive forms. This means that discourse analysts treat a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic material⁶¹ - speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas, even organisations and institutions- as ‘texts’ or ‘writings’” (2000: 10). The most relevant argument in this quotation is that discourse is constitutive and that it is not possible to arbitrarily differentiate research materials and categorise them as meaningful or not meaningful. According to Carpentier and Spinoy, the way Laclau and Mouffe consider ‘text’ situates this approach in the macro-textual and macro-contextual levels. The ‘macro textual’ refers to understanding text in a wider definition while the ‘contextual level’ considers the social as the place where meaning is placed (2008: 5). Therefore, Laclau and Mouffe’s version of discourse falls in the category of “discourse-as-representation”. As Carpentier and Spinoy explain, this stance is related to Roland Barthes’ position on considering texts in their broad definition and

⁶¹ I consider that Howarth refers to visual material.

as “materializations of meaning and/or ideology” (ibid.). Moreover, with this conception of text, Laclau and Mouffe’s approach concentrates “*on* the meanings, representations, or ideologies embedded in the text, and not so much on the language⁶² of the text” (ibid. emphasis in original).

These various arguments about the textual influenced my focus on discursivity and the way I developed the analytical context. Firstly, the ‘openness’ of discourse theory’s considering texts as a full range of sources for analysis provides unmatched versatility for the analytical task. The other main feature of the ‘poststructural text’ is to focus on the meanings and interventions, the frames, and the purposes behind images and documents. These aspects shaped the way I collected the research material as well as my stance on discursivity. In this sense, the way I view discursivity, as level of analysis, is in line with this account of ‘text’.

3.2.1 Text as a place for intervention

Heidegger and Derrida’s reflections on language had a massive influence on the theorisation of social and political issues (Howarth, 2013: 101-2). Discourse theory is the perfect example of this influence. The ontological argument of the political pervading the social, thus, is revealed in what is invested in the text. Following this argument, the text is necessarily immersed in the previously mentioned dynamics of power. The title of this section points to the basic, yet powerful arguments of discourse theory to study the constitution of the social and the fixation of meaning. In this section, I outline some of the ‘poststructural strategies’ that are useful for analytical concerns. I referred above to the Derrida’s statement about ‘being outside the text’, which is often misunderstood because it is taken literally. The expression points to the complexity of sign systems and to the impossibility of pure interiority. Connected with this view, modes of representation and the mechanism involved in text construction (e.g. grammars, rhetoric and narrativity) mediate politics (Shapiro, op. cit.: 12). Poststructuralist scholars’ concern about language and representation is exemplified in this quote,

To textualize a domain of analysis is to recognize, first of all, that any “reality” is mediated by a mode of representation and, second, that representations are not descriptions of a world of facticity but are ways of making facticity. Their value is thus not to be discerned in their correspondence with something, but rather in the economies of possible representations within which they participate (ibid.:13-4)

⁶² The last part of the quotation refers to the linguistic aspect.

Following the aforementioned arguments, I regard *text* as a place of intervention. Specifically, it is a place where different attempts to define the content of the text converge. As I previously explained, for discourse theory, any linguistic and non-linguistic material is regarded as text and the implications related to the status of what is analysed. Hence, under this thinking, analytical attention is directed towards the diversity of forms in which meaning is displayed. This implies that any image or text is an element of a chain of meaning and that all the meanings expressed in the images depend on each other. We are talking here about *intertextuality*.⁶³ Intertextuality conveys the relation and dependence of the meaning expressed in any element. The meaning of any image or written source depends not only on its own feature of meaning but also on the meaning expressed in other sources (Rose, op. cit: 191).

Intertextuality is a central reference that underpins the way I frame the research material to address meaning and representation. This concept, broadly defined, refers to the connections and references that one text has with another text. It was Barthes's account of text that brought about the possibility to analyse cultural artefacts from a wider perspective (Gregory, 1989: xviii-xix). This account matches discourse theory's concern of not distinguishing between discursive and non-discursive possibilities. On this subject, I draw on an intertextual approach as a 'poststructuralist' strategy that considers, "[o]f a critical inquiry into an area of thought where there is no final arbiter of truth, where meaning is derived from an interrelationship of texts, and power is implicated by the problem of language and other signifying practices" (Der Derian, 1989:6).

In this sense, what I consider 'research material' comprises those pieces for analysis that lack a 'pure essence' and do not portray full objectivity. Therefore, their textuality and contingency are entirely stressed. The meaning presented in those pieces is considered as a resource and investment of power. In other words, "we must operate with a view of politics that is sensitive to textuality" (ibid.: 12) In my strategy for analysis, textuality and intertextuality give the dimension of critical engagement to the politics and the representation due to questioning the claims of objectivity that are made in any meaningful reference. Michael Shapiro (1989) calls for the possibility of and necessity to 'textualise' a domain of social and political relations. In my work, this takes place in the analysis of those representations that include principles and notions that promote specific forms of social and political organisation. I consider that this stance on text and the concept of intertextuality exemplify some of the most interesting contributions of

⁶³ This concept was initially used in literary studies as a principle of interpretation. Julia Kristeva's and Roland Barthes' work on semiotics and Claude Lévi-Strauss' views on anthropology include references to intertextuality (Shank, 2008: 468-9).

poststructuralist thinking. I aim to analyse and show the intertextual relations (Weldes, 2003) of the images and documents as well as the articulation that creates the links between binary discourses. The other important aspect of the 'textual' is to introduce some of the concepts of Jacques Derrida. These concepts work as complementary to the discourse theory frame. Some of these concepts will help to develop a way of 'questioning and reading' the claims of social objectivity and the content of the material.

3.3 The essence, the presence and the logos

The title of this section is a small gesture of recognition of the (immense) work of Derrida (and not a conceited poststructuralist cliché). It is also a way to introduce part of the discussion at issue. Rejecting the fullness of any object or subject mediated through meaning and questioning the essence demand an elaborated argument. I think that one of the most valuable contributions of discourse theory is the way Derrida's concepts were used to theorise crucial aspects of the social and the political. Positively, Laclau developed many central thoughts in reference to Derrida's work. The unfixedness of meaning, its permanent deferral and difference, undecidability and the incomplete determination of the structure, and deconstruction are some specific ideas that influenced Laclau.⁶⁴ I engage with Derrida's ideas⁶⁵ in a very specific and 'useful' way. The aim is to set up a point of entry and the strategic deployment of an interpretative means 'to read' social and political issues. For this, I will concentrate on three notions: the metaphysics of presence, logocentrism and deconstruction. These ideas maintain a logic and show one side of Derrida's critical thinking that is worth exploring. The relevant issue is that these references are interconnected and become a main strategy to question any claim of social objectivity. Let us enter 'Derridean territory'

⁶⁴ It is worth to mention that Derrida is quoted only two times (mentioned four) in *HSS* first edition and acknowledged once in the second edition's preface (2001). The quotations concern the 'logic of the supplement' (p. 88 in the second note of the chapter two) and the second (p.112) highlights the commonalities of the way 'discourse' is defined in *Writing and Difference*. The quote is half page.

⁶⁵ To explain Derrida's work is beyond the possibilities and scope of this dissertation. Certainly, I have to go through to the including/excluding process to present the ideas that I consider more relevant for this work, at the expense of missing others. My interest is to show a general background of the three concepts used and give clear explanations of how I will use them.

3.3.1 On metaphysical fissures.

In the case of Derrida, he uses the criticisms of Edmund Husserl (the search for transcendence or a priori subjectivity) and Ferdinand de Saussure (the idea of a closed system) in addition to the re-elaboration of Heidegger's idea of absent ground to elaborate some of his thoughts⁶⁶ (Norris, 2004). In the introduction of this dissertation, I presented the argument on the impossibility of a centre's establishment of a definitive meaning or closure to an element. I followed Oliver Marchart's proposition to link Heidegger, Derrida, and Laclau to a stance named post-foundational thinking. Heidegger's work is regarded as a major influence of this stance. Phenomenology is the philosophical background behind this, and Derrida walks this path but distances himself (as Heidegger did) from Husserl's transcendental project. With this background, the first explanation relates to *the metaphysics of presence*. Through Heideggerian thinking on the question of Being⁶⁷, Derrida addresses the question of transcendence and the hierarchies that this way of thinking entails. Transcendence and presence are in the spotlight. In his work, Derrida engages with a historical revision of how metaphysics appears in philosophical understanding, starting with the Greek thinkers.⁶⁸ This revision opens the gate to the central criticisms that characterise his works. Derrida's argument makes the problems of this understanding evident, as metaphysics has been considered as the non-mediated access to full presence. According to Spivak, Derrida uses the word 'metaphysics' to refer to any sense of presence ([1976] 1997: xxi).

Derrida's criticisms of transcendence are exemplified with the different ways this 'form of being' has been characterised. I quote at length here so that Derrida's explanation is clear,

the entire history of the concept of structure, before the rupture of which we are speaking, must be thought of as a series of substitutions of center for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the center. Successively, and in a regulated fashion, the center receives different forms or names. The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix...is the determination of Being as *presence* in all senses of this word. It could be shown that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence—*eidos*, *archē*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *alētheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth ([1978] 2005: 353).

⁶⁶ I am referring only to these references as the ones that were 'adapted' for social and political issues. The work of Derrida touched many thinkers and ideas apart from this.

⁶⁷ There are some criticisms of Heidegger (Norris, 2004: 14).

⁶⁸ In the *Exerge* opening *Of Grammatology*, Derrida mentions that from Plato to Hegel or from the pre-Socratics to Heidegger, a logo-centric aspect has grounded Western metaphysics (1976, [1997]: 3).

According to Derrida, these are all of the names given to the foundation. In this teleological context, these names serve as reference to set a horizon of possibility and fullness. This critique on the metaphysics of presence leads to the second notion that I referred. For Derrida the 'logos' is that central element that has dominated the understanding in Western thinking.⁶⁹ 'Logos' (Ancient Greek) can be translated as "language, discourse, knowledge, the word" (Stocker, 2006: 51) For instance, in his books *Of Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference*, Derrida identifies 'speech' (logos) as the mode that has been privileged. The opposite affected is 'writing', and it is only considered in a differentiated or supplementary way. According to Derrida, Western thinking has privileged speech with truth. In other words, this meant that speech has been acknowledged as having more immediate access to truth (Naas, 2014: 240). As with the binary speech/writing, Derrida argues that the 'Western thought of being' has operated based on this type of hierarchical disposition of the elements. As he explains, "Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the being of the entity as presence" ([1976] 1997: 12). This hierarchical, or logocentric, configuration is "not just *one* metaphysical gesture among others; it is *the* metaphysical exigency, which has been the most constant, most profound, and most potent procedure" (Derrida, 1988: 93). The question is whether language can be considered as a pure presence because difference constitutes the meaning of the words. With this argument, meaning conveys the 'present' identity of the word but also the traces of the absent ones (Daín, 2011: 37). The crucial point of Derrida's criticism is that his arguments became the cornerstone of problematising foundational theories and their claims about truth and knowledge. Further, this thinking challenged the ontological and epistemic frames of foundational theories dealing with social and political issues (Norris, 2002: 31).

My aim is to explain how these arguments can be used. The 'poststructuralist turn' highlights the textuality and contextualisation of the topic or issue analysed. Here, I follow Richard Ashley's explanation of logocentrism applied to a poststructuralist critique of the claims of objectivity regarding the social and political spheres. Logocentrism is "[...] a practical orientation and a procedure that at once presupposes, invokes, and effects a normalizing practical expectation" (Ashley, 1989: 261). This means that the interpretation and practice must achieve recognition by mobilising a foundation presented as necessary. As seen, this is in complete alignment with discourse theory's point of hegemony. This situation entails that the dominant interpretation works as a sovereign voice dictating the meaning and direction of a vision and the (self) recognition of this sovereign voice as a pure and original presence.

⁶⁹ This reference includes Plato and a generalisation of 'European thought'.

This sovereignty or legitimacy is not questioned, as it is presented as an original presence “an unproblematic, extra historical identity in need of no critical accounting” (ibid.). The word ‘extra’ explains ‘everything’. Thinking in terms of logocentrism, an account of social objectivity (e.g. extra-historical or pure presence) cannot be regarded as being able to transcend meaning and objectivity. Claiming a privileged (ontological) position implies constituting a hierarchy. This is the reason that Derrida targets the binaries that characterise foundational thinking. The examples of binary-oppositions are endless. However, in this case, Ashley’s point is that the logocentric discourse occupies the sovereign and legitimate position *vis à vis* the derivative or excluded. A ‘basic’ poststructural ‘strategic move’ is to address the structuration of presence and find the binary disposition of the elements. In this way, the logos will be exposed, thus revealing the meanings or elements that are privileged or excluded. Laclau and Mouffe do not explicitly consider the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism as concepts or analytical references. I contend that both notions are in line with the anti-essentialist considerations of discourse theory and can be combined and used with the concerns of construction of hegemonic formations, identity and discourse.

In order to proceed with a logocentric setting, Derrida proposes thinking in terms of *différance*.⁷⁰ This neologism (not a nominal concept) tries to show the tension and impossibility of a final signification. Addressing the metaphysics of presence does not entail the mere subversion of the binary. The two verbs ‘within’ *différance*, to defer and to differ, convey spatialization and temporalisation or the impossibility of a final signification (Derrida, [1972] 1982: 7-9). In other words, *différance* can be seen as an alternative to the metaphysics of presence because it simultaneously considers the possibilities of absence and presence (Edkins op. cit.: 68). If these explanations are translated for analytical questions, “[T]hus *différance* captures the way in which meaning is produced both by the interplay of different traces and by the necessary deferment of some possibilities not actualized or signified by the play of traces” (Howarth, 2000a: 40). In practice, the basic move in addressing logocentric configurations is to identify opposite poles and their interrelation. The way to proceed in this Derridean dimension is to expose the boundaries of the elements that have been placed in opposition. This brings about the most notorious concept in Derrida’s intellectual work: deconstruction.

⁷⁰ I am using *différance* as a ‘bridge to reach’ deconstruction. I do not focus on all of the dimensions and explanations it offers because my interest is the ‘practicality’ of deconstruction.

3.3.2 Approaching the textual and discursivity through a deconstructive reading

In this last section, I articulate the specific concepts explained in this chapter with some of discourse theory's ideas to clarify their features and relation. There is a complementary relation that underpins this dissertation's conceptual and working frame. The preceding sections represent a 'transition' from the conceptual level into the strategies and the analytical approach that I will deploy in the three conceptual settings. Working through a poststructuralist logic implies specific positioning due to the focus of this logic. I use the word 'approach' in the title of this section to indicate the way I will address and read the research material. The notion of deconstruction is involved in both cases. On the relation of deconstruction and discourse theory's analytical concerns, Laclau offers a straightforward explanation, "[a] deconstructive approach is highly relevant to two dimensions of the political...as the *instituting* moment of society. This is the second dimension of the political: the incompleteness of all acts of political institution" (1996c: 49-50). Furthermore, Laclau argues that "the central theme of deconstruction is the politico-discursive production of society" (ibid.: 61). And, as I discussed in the previous chapter, hegemony is the central category to address the political. Derrida and Laclau agree on the binary of stability/instability and the possibilities that can be addressed with a deconstructive perspective (Derrida, 1996: 86). I understand that deconstruction is the possibility to expose contingency in the text.

Instead of listing different 'definitions' of deconstruction,⁷¹ I will explain the implications of performing a deconstructive reading for the analytical part of this dissertation. For instance, different commentators (Campbell, 2012; Newman, 2005; Carspecken, 2008) agree that deconstruction is neither a method⁷² nor a list of steps for 'doing analysis' (in the positivist way). Leonard Lawlor provides an accessible but substantial visualisation of it,

In general, deconstructive critique targets the illusion of presence, that is, the idea that being is simply present and available before our eyes. For Derrida, the idea of presence implies self-givenness, simplicity, purity, identity, and stasis. Therefore, deconstruction aims to demonstrate that presence is never given as such, never simple, never pure, never self-identical, and never static; it is always given as something other, complex, impure, differentiated, and generated (2014:122).

⁷¹ Certainly, it is better to talk about a 'general sense' of what Derrida implies with deconstruction. For instance, see: Stocker 2006 (Ch. 8).

⁷² Method understood as a verified procedure based on predetermined steps. For some analyses and theorisation based on this concept, see: Arfi, 2013; Campbell, 1998; and Dillon, 2013.

I take the stance that deconstruction is a positioning from which is possible to question and read the accounts of social objectivity. Therefore, I regard deconstruction as a particular way of reading and addressing the textual and the meaning involved. The relevant aspect is that these concepts open the discussion between the metaphysical structures of essence and presence and the hierarchies and power interventions, namely hegemony, inherent to all of these (Newman, 2005: 84). This means that the objective is to ‘read’ the logocentrism in those discourses and representations and question the borders, inclusions and exclusions that took place. This positioning allows for a possible understanding of those claims of fullness, those essences presented as original, those hierarchical oppositions, and those attempts to represent the logos. The renowned criticism that the structure cannot avoid its own structuration shows that, in analytical terms, we cannot ‘step outside’ of the text and then perform an ‘objective’ reading of it. The point is to see the structure and its binary construction and to observe how one end is privileged over the other.

With the Derridean perspective, it is possible to ‘target’ the essence, foundations and related teleological claims of the social formation or project at stake. Accordingly, discourse theory questions the naturalisation and fixation of meaning that are inherent to the articulation of discourses. The teleological claims are very close to the possibility of hegemonic closure. Consequently, the deconstructive approach can expose those closures by focusing on the binaries and privileged elements that form the discourses and representations (ibid.: 186). This stance also concerns the visual analysis, “[L]ogocentrism operates in images by appealing to sources of transcendence outside of the image, and we assume them to be natural, a priori or fundamental” (Derrida, 1972/2004, as cited in Campbell, 2012). I will combine this stance on visuals with other analytical references that are explained in the following chapter. For instance, when looking at a poster depicting a collective identity or the symbolic representation of an ideal (peace), the aim is to understand what is essentialised as part of that notion of social objectivity. As I previously stated, nevertheless, a frame based on deconstruction is a way of reading and addressing the text. It shows the impossibility of pure and complete essence, but this does not imply that it offers another essence (Smith, 1994: 173).

My last point in this chapter is to explain the relation and reach of discursivity, textuality, and the content of the research material. Discursivity and textuality are closely related, as the former is only perceived by working on a textual frame of analysis. In this sense, Laclau and Mouffe’s approach offers a theoretical and analytical advantage because all social practices are considered as a source of analysis. In this respect, they reject the differentiation between the discursive and non-discursive because it is

incompatible with their ontological position. Discourse analysis comprises the study of signifying practices as discursive forms, whereas materiality is not neglected but rather addressed by the fixation of meaning. In other words, this stance includes linguistic and non-linguistic material for analysis, considering that is possible to regard this material as 'texts' or 'writings' (Howarth, 2000a: 141). The argument of textuality presents the opportunity to engage with practically every meaningful expression that is framed or considered to have a political dimension. In summary, the notion of textuality is a decisive reference, and I use it in two ways. One is to consider the textual form of any research material. This means focusing on the meaning invested in the material. The second feature is that, as discourse theory argues, any meaningful element can be analysed as 'text' (Howarth, 2000: 141).

To a great extent, this chapter traces the possibilities of a third point of reference with the explanations of different 'poststructuralist strategies' or positions to address analytical questions. These strategies provide another critical angle overlooked in Peace and Conflict Research and by other analytical traditions.

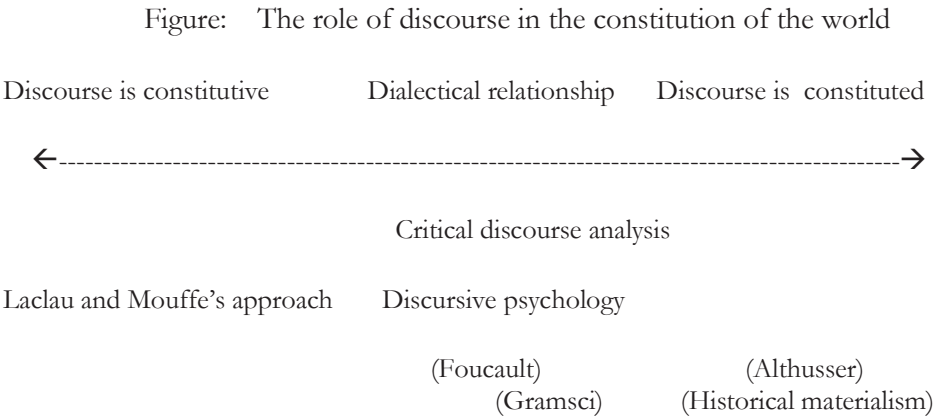
4 ON ANALYTICAL STRATEGIES AND VISUAL METHODS

In this chapter, I outline some of the specific strategies and methodological resources that will be used in the analytical task. First, I review the placement of discourse theory compared with other versions of discourse analysis. In the section that follows, I introduce some of discourse theory's analytical strategies and method guidelines that will be applied. Regarding the research material, I will explain the guidelines for selection and the contexts in which material will be studied. The analytical context includes what I will refer to as the immediate and intended levels. These levels will develop a specific way that concerns the presentation of the material's content. These levels came about as one of the methodological challenges with the analytical context of this work. This is complemented with general concerns related to the visual analysis and the frame that I will use as proposed by Gillian Rose. Specifically, I discuss the methods of compositional interpretation and discourse analysis. Finally, I explain one way of studying documents and written sources in relation to discourse theory.

4.1 Analysing 'the world' through discourse

The basic claim of social constructionist approaches focused on language is that the access to reality is inexorably bound to language. Working within a poststructuralist stance of discourse, the basic thought is to problematise the discourses and representations and the attempts to 'naturalise' a particular version of a signifier. This critical enterprise leads to questioning aspects of social objectivity that are taken for granted. The point is to identify the way different actors articulating a discourse make the recognition of what is regarded as political reality possible (Shapiro, 1988: xii). Therefore, by rejecting the instrumentalist understanding of language, the understanding of the social world is a result of the meaning ascribed to a particular situation (Jørgensen and Phillips, *op. cit.*: 9). Basically, the analytical task is to understand "how certain discourses emerged and flourished while others did not, or why certain forms of identity were constructed and how they came to prevail over others in certain historical contexts" (Howarth, 1998: 284).

There are many authors and approaches⁷³ using ‘discourse’ as a central concept, an analytical tool or a combination of both. The next figure (op. cit.:20) is from Louise Jørgensen and Marianne Phillips’ book *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*.⁷⁴ It situates different approaches and authors that have referred to discourse in their explanations of the constitution of social reality.



As seen in the first line, the ontological understanding of social reality is the main category that determines the perspectives and the authors’ position. In this way, from the centre to the right end, the references retain an understanding of essentialism (Althusser and Gramsci) or contain some distinctions (discursive and non-discursive) that discourse theory rejects. In chapter 2, I have referred to the influence that Althusser, Gramsci, and Foucault⁷⁵ (in less degree) had on Laclau and Mouffe. The

⁷³ Firstly, it is necessary to consider that perspectives with different ontological and epistemological grounds have conceptualised discourse in various ways. As consequence, any definition of discourse can be contested. One of the main distinctions between Laclau and Mouffe with other approaches referring to discourse (e.g. Foucauldian inspired or critical discourse analysis CDA) is that the others reject the distinction between discursive and non-discursive dimensions of the social. This is, obviously, because the ontological stance that characterises discourse theory. It is beyond this dissertation’s scope to assess all the different approaches that refer to discourse. By working with discourse theory, I am stating that this perspective is the one that I consider closer to my own understanding of the social and the political. Secondly, it is important to distinguish between discourse analysis as a methodological strategy and discourse theory as a theoretical reference. For analysis not related with discourse theory, see: Wetherell, et al. 2001, or Angermüller, ed. 2014.

⁷⁴ This book focuses on three perspectives: discourse theory, critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology.

⁷⁵ There is for instance a ‘Foucauldian’ influenced strand of discourse analysis which share certain affinities with poststructuralism due to its focus to power/knowledge concerns and the

difference is clear because the post-foundational and anti-essentialist argument of discourse theory is incompatible with other ontological positions. It is not possible to hold a distinction between discursive and non-discursive while claiming that discourse is constitutive of social reality. The distinction implies a ground of objectivism that condenses a foundational stance. Regarding the dimensions of the discursive, Laclau and Mouffe criticise Foucault's division of 'discursive' and 'non-discursive' formations, arguing that all objects depend on a discursive composition (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 107). In this respect, they reject the meaningful existence of the object outside of the discursive setting, but this position does not imply a denial of the 'real existence' of the object. In line with this, Laclau and Mouffe reaffirm the "material character of every discursive structure" (ibid.). I see that the main difference between the perspectives using discourse as the main focus for analysis lies in the ontological views of what constitutes social and political 'reality'.⁷⁶

Laclau defines three currents, or origins, of the actual poststructuralist thinking of discourse: the later work of Barthes⁷⁷ and the notion of plural text; Lacanian theory with the logic of the signifier; and, the *deconstructionist* movement by Derrida and, later, the work of Rodolphe Gasché (Laclau, [1993] 2007: 544). Discourse theory goes beyond only 'retrieving' the meanings that social actors elaborate; it also rejects the claim that is possible to uncover the 'true underlying' meanings of texts and actions. Consequently, it refuses the consideration that universal causal laws or models to explain phenomena in the natural world can be applied to the analysis of the social (Howarth, 2013).

In my understanding, discourse theory is the only perspective articulating a poststructuralist stance of discourse that combines ontological and theoretical explanations. As I mentioned in previous chapters, there are many 'strands' or schools of discourse. Some scholars (Glynos, 2009) related to the 'Essex School' of discourse

historical development of discursive formations (Cheek, 2008). Nevertheless, Laclau makes a clear distinction between their concept of discourse and Foucault. See: Hansen and Sonnichsen, 2014.

⁷⁶ Critical Discourse Analysis is an example of this. It shares some assumptions with discourse theory at the analytical or methodological level, but this perspective holds a different ontological explanation about social reality. In this respect, I consider that combining these perspectives depends on the ontological commitment of the researcher. For the differences between perspectives, see: Howarth, 2013; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002. However, there are analysis that consider a complementary function between perspectives, see: Chouliaraki, 2005; Fairclough, 2003:88; Hansen, 2006; Nabers, 2015.

⁷⁷ The case of Barthes is an example of moving towards poststructuralism. According to Sayyid and Zac, Barthes' work shows a movement from a closed structure of sign in his early work on semiology to a 'poststructuralist' view, noting that there is no a pre-existing relationship between the signifier and signified (op. cit.: 258).

theory find three dimensions from which different approaches⁷⁸ to discourse can be differentiated: ontology, focus and purpose. These dimensions are related, and they affect the way a research problem or design is constructed (ibid.: 6). In the case of operationalising discourse theory's concepts, it is generally considered that the strategy follows a 'problem-driven' stance instead of a method or theory-driven stance (Howarth, 2005: 318; Torfing, 2005: 22). Furthermore, the most important argument to consider for an analytical strategy is that the object of study must be constructed (Glynos, op. cit.: 10; Howarth, 2000; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 144). These are important points that I will address in more detail in the next chapter. Discourse theory's analytical concerns and strategies and the issue of method

In previous chapters, I referred to the criticisms towards discourse theory about the lack of methods to apply related concepts and because of the abstraction of these concepts. Some scholars have addressed this problem from different perspectives that propose strategies and guidelines for analysis based on discourse theory. I present a general overview of these perspectives and identify the aspects that I will consider for my approach. Generally speaking, the analytical concerns within discourse theory include "[t]he way in which political forces and social actors construct meanings within incomplete and undecidable social structures. This is achieved by examining the particular structures within which social agents take decisions and articulate hegemonic projects and discursive formations (Howarth, 2000a:129-30). This explanation shows the general logic about the role of hegemony and discourse. In the same line of problematisation, discourse theory investigates the conditions of how discourses give an account of the social reality and how these are contested and changed, the formation and dissolution of identities (political dimension), the logic of hegemonic articulation and the construction of social myths and collective imaginaries. Furthermore, these investigated issues or objects are premised in the centrality of social antagonisms that draw political frontiers between social agents and thus affect the constitution of identity and social objectivity (Howarth, 1998: 284, 2000: 131-6).

In overall terms, discourse theory's methodological concerns include, "[t]he appropriate relationship between description, understanding and explanation, the role (if any) of causal explanation the place of critique and normative evaluation" (Howarth, 2005: 317). Discourse theory also aims to produce new interpretations by exposing issues that other approaches overlook or by problematising existing understandings and offering new ways of seeing them (ibid.: 320-1). The most recent methodological

⁷⁸ These are political discourse theory, rhetorical political analysis, discourse historical analysis in critical discourse analysis, interpretive policy analysis, discursive psychology and Q methodology.

proposals consider that the logics of difference and equivalence can be identified through the rhetorical figures of metonymy, metaphor and synecdoche (Nabers, 2015: 136-7). These figures complement a textual analysis of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations, corpus linguistics and some critical discourse analysis tools (ibid.: 147). These methodological resources are part of a poststructuralist discourse theory of global politics. For instance, an analysis under this framework addresses identity construction and the articulation of foreign policy in relation to a dislocatory event (e.g. United States' foreign policy and the War on Terror). The analysis combines content analysis, the discursive articulation of specific signifiers and the relations of equivalence and difference.

The other prominent effort to development a research programme is Post-foundational Discourse Analysis (Marttila, 2015, 2016). This programme aims to articulate a systematic edifice with specific methodological guidelines to address empirical research under discourse theory's ontological and theoretical stances. It is based on the conjunction of deconstruction, 'Foucaultian' discourse analysis, structural semiotics, social semiotics, narrative analysis and situational analysis (Marttila, 2016: 3-4). This program truly addresses an all-encompassing approach that includes methodological positions (second-order hermeneutics and methodological holism), a phenomenal framework (discursive relations, identities and regimes) and different analytical stages and strategies (Marttila, 2015). Out of all of these issues, it is the strategy⁷⁹ of methodological holism that provides an explanation for the analytical frame of this dissertation. The second strategy of operationalising methodological holism is based on the 'theory-driven' construction of the studied empirical phenomena (Diaz-Bone, 2007, §35; translated by Marttila, 2016: 111).

According to Marttila, "[O]ur theoretical framework opens up the possibility to choose, define and interpret empirical objects" (ibid.). I consider that this strategy offers another possibility that complements the 'problem-driven' approach previously mentioned. The strategy is particularly useful as a ground for my work because I am proposing to contextualise and study specific aspects of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity contrasted with three cases. The theory-driven stance also considers the construction of the research object based on post-foundational discourse analysis' theoretical framework. This framework considers the contingent formation of social phenomena through discourse, which brings about a deconstructive standpoint.

⁷⁹ Marttila also considers the first strategy of methodological holism: "[The] holistic use of scientific models means that objects, concepts, scientific practices and methods are related to an inherently coherent model of themes, theories, objects, object relations and causalities" (in Diaz-Bone, 2006, §5, Marttila, 2016: 111).

Through deconstruction, it is possible to address the self-evident accounts that form the social and point out the characteristics of discourses as well as the possibility of meaningful objects within the social (ibid.: 140-1). As seen, these two issues follow the general post-foundational argument presented in Chapter 2 and the ‘Derridean’ frame mentioned in Chapter 3. Marttila proposes some research strategies based on Foucault’s discourse analysis. However, I consider that these strategies are focused on specific discourse formations and related practices or historical developments of certain discourses. My proposal of constructing an analytical context with three conceptual settings requires another approach because the focus is on the possible discursive configurations and the interrelations of the logics of difference and equivalence.

To develop my analytical strategy⁸⁰, I will follow the proposals of Jørgensen and Phillips regarding the organisation of discourse, the investment of meaning in key signifiers, issues of identity and what they call “concepts for conflict analysis” (op. cit.: 50). Additionally, I will consider strategies of deconstruction and hegemonic analysis (Åkerstrøm Andersen, op. cit.: 62).

4.2 Context and research material

In this section, I discuss the initial steps of my analytical context. Firstly, it is necessary to explain the nature and role of the notion of ‘context’. I follow the argument that in qualitative research, context is “necessarily relative to purpose and perspective” (Hammersley, 2008: 122-3). Hence, this dissertation is placed among the constructive perspectives⁸¹ that consider that the context is developed for the objectives and scope of the research. The situation here is to acknowledge “the incommensurable contexts in which we could locate what we are studying in the sense that a host of stories could be told” (ibid.).⁸² The dimension that this work stresses is the diversity of discursive contexts that surrounds any piece or element and makes them capable of forming a new analytical body. This argument follows the logic of intertextuality. The context of any inquiry will depend on the problem investigated and the researcher’s design and choices. Naturally, this has an impact on the criteria to select research material (quantity and quality).

⁸⁰ The strategy will be explained in the next chapter.

⁸¹ I have mentioned this in the work of Howarth (2000) and Jørgensen and Phillips (2002).

⁸² In this case, Martyn Hammersley states that this stance is “postmodernist in broad terms”. The relevant issue is to emphasise the validity of different ways to make research and the way context is used or defined ontologically.

Regarding the selection of the research material, David Howarth⁸³ distinguishes different types of research material or ‘empirical data’ when applying discourse theory. This author refers to these suggested materials, “[P]rimary documents, in-depth interviews, newspaper reports, observed and unobserved social practices, images, quantitative data, even buildings and historical monuments” (ibid.: 335).⁸⁴

Howarth differentiates between linguistic and non-linguistic and reactive and non-reactive data (ibid.: 335-6). According to this scholar, interviews and documents are linguistic material and reactive while participant observation, action research and images, constructs, architectures are non-linguistic and non-reactive. These distinctions are pragmatic and not ontological, and they must all be considered within a meaningful system. As seen, for Howarth, ‘images’ are labelled as non-linguistic; however, I think that this is a limited reflection because posters are examples of research material that combine linguistic and non-linguistic elements. Posters are one of the most used means for conveying informative tasks (e.g. United Nations). Specifically, the written messages complement the pictorial elements and together will reveal patterns and discursive structures of the images (Spencer, 2011: 162). Both kinds of material facilitate and contribute to the conceptual considerations that construct the settings proposed as contextual frame. I refer to the research material as ‘pieces for analysis’ because of the way the analytical context of this dissertation developed. In practice, I had all of those pieces as “dispersed sites” that shared within their content a certain relation but needed a context to bring them together. I literally had many ‘pieces’ that were articulated with a context and to my analytical context. The combination, hence, creates a new analytical body that is addressed via intertextuality, deconstruction, discursivity and the other concepts. As explained before, with discourse theory, it is possible to construct the research object or object of study, the images and written sources are used to construct what will be analysed. In view of this, Howarth makes it clear that “the selection of an image or building, as well as the point and purpose of interpreting such objects, is relative to the problems and research strategies employed” (2005: 340).

In fact, the selection was one of the main challenges in this dissertation. As I mentioned in the introduction, developing the dissertation’s conceptual frame and analytical context was a process of ‘mutual-constitution’. It was by following the UN

⁸³ For this part, I rely mostly on Howarth’s suggestion because he is the most visible scholar working and proposing academic research with discourse theory and poststructuralism perspectives.

⁸⁴ It is worth to mention that in a previous publication Howarth (2000) did not mention images, buildings or monuments as sources of information. He referred to “non-linguistic material”. I say this to stress that the inclusion of a wider range of sources for analysis, such as the ones I will use, it is still developing.

that the idea of a hegemonic actor presented itself as a possibility for analysis. Even though I kept the three conceptual settings in mind, my search for suitable actors and pieces for analysis led to the modification of some initial considerations of the settings. The selected actors and the contexts of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity became the main reference to find actors or themes that were relevant for the analysis. This meant that I evaluated which pieces were the most representative for the actor and setting in question. In this evaluation, the discursive and visual representation of the 'world'⁸⁵ emerged as an analytical reference to gather the images and documents.

This evaluation helped me to choose the most appropriate actors and thematic reference for the settings. The justification here follows the same argument about the specification of the scope and problematisation at stake, because these aspects determine the context and limits of the research (*ibid.*: 337). I started this dissertation focusing on the visual aspect and representation, but I noticed, at the same time, the need to also include written sources (documents or speeches) for a more complete perspective on the analytical scope. As I explained in the first chapter, while I was developing the analytical context, the visual representation of the world is an outstanding feature that routinely appears in many actors' discourse. This situation led me to consider actors in dissimilar positions and the political scope. In practical terms, my first concern about gathering images and written sources was the references of social and political organisations, which I referred to as visions of social objectivity. More specifically, my focus was on those pieces where the discursive and visual representation (directly or conceptually) of the world was included.

Concerning the number of images and documents selected and used for the analysis, the interpretative and qualitative dimension of this work provides an initial guideline. Gillian Rose argues that in the case of visual analysis, and with discourse analysis as a reference, the task does not rely on a significant number of pieces (2012: 199). In this way, attention is directed towards the meaning of the pieces selected. In the case of this work, this did not imply that the number of pieces collected was inadequate. I followed Howarth's argument that the number of pieces, or research material, analysed depends on the appropriate context and limits of the topic or problem to study. This author recommends the following, "[t]he researcher is compelled to make decisions about the appropriate level and degree of contextualisation and must establish the limits of any particular project" (Howarth, 2005: 337). This that the criteria for the quantity and selection of the pieces for analysis is related to the specific problem investigated.

Furthermore, in contrast with a quantitative approach, a discursive analysis focuses on aspects such as these, "[t]he meaning, genesis and dissemination of ideas, which are

⁸⁵ I give more details about this reference in Chapter 5.

not easily detectable by quantitative methods. The text selected...will be more the result of the researcher's intuitive judgements about their significance and meaning" (ibid.). This argument is highly important for this dissertation. I rely on my 'judgement' that all of the pieces for each setting and the conceptual settings provide a solid background to follow the discursive configuration and the interrelation of the logics of difference and equivalence. For the analytical task, I collected more than 100 images from which 47⁸⁶ were considered for analysis. I reviewed about 70 written sources (documents, declarations, official statements and speeches). This selection, accordingly, follows the argument about the 'construction' of what is studied. All of the pieces were collected from visual and documental archives, online databases, official websites and compilations. In the case of the images, my interest was to have the majority of images available for the reader on the Internet. In this sense, the majority of images included in this work can be retrieved via the provided link. The colour and presentation of the images were not edited or modified.⁸⁷

As I noted in the Introduction, this dissertation aims to contribute to the stream of works that use visual material as a source of analysis but considering that the written sources⁸⁸ have the same relevance. The argument that images have more explanatory capacity than words is one of the usual positions for late accounts that emphasise the importance of visual culture (Berger, 2008; Mitchell, 1994). This hierarchical arrangement of the visual over other modes of representation leads to accounts of 'ocularcentrism' (Jay, 1993 in Rose, 2012: 3. See also Shim, op. cit: 31-2). My working position concerning images and written sources does not consider the subordination of either; I consider that both kinds of sources are complementary rather than arranged hierarchically. As David Shim argues, "[T]he effect(s) and meaning(s) of pictures are only created through the interplay between images *and* texts" (2014: 9). In this sense, privileging one over the other is out of the question. For example, posters combine and include words, images and depictions; the message indistinctly depends on these modes. In short, the main concern of the analytical task is to complement the images and written sources in order to show the accounts of social objectivity.

One important matter to explain is the genres, or types, of visual materials and the way I am considering them. I selected all the images based on their content and in relation to the dissertation's analytical context. In other words, I am equating the status of all the visual material as 'visual resources'. This follows the textual feature of any source or piece of analysis. The focus of this feature is the meaning of the visual

⁸⁶ All the information about the sources and legal disclaimer is on pages 285-289.

⁸⁷ Only the size was adapted to the printing requirements.

⁸⁸ I use this term as a differentiation from the common use of 'text'.

material. In this way, the genre is not as relevant, which allows me to include posters, murals or illustrations without distinctions. I am aware that this stance is unfair for the genres of the images in general. In fact, in some cases, the genre of the image and the actor has an impact on the claim of authority linked to the image (Shapiro, 1988). However, equating the status makes the selection of material more flexible, which in turn enables the analysis to be more inclusive and richer in terms of content. I made this decision because the main objective is to address the discourses that are articulated through visuals, verbal images and texts (Rose, op. cit.: 190).

4.3 Splitting the cont/text: immediate and intended levels

In this section, I explain a very specific strategy regarding the research material and the level of analysis that this dissertation puts forth. As seen, the whole approach and structure of this dissertation are based on some decisive ontological and theoretical arguments. However, the analytical task also implied a strategy to build the inquiry. After developing the idea of the analytical context, the following task was to set up the content of the settings and arrange their presentation in the analytical task. My concern was to combine the structure of the three settings with the content of the research material. It was in the practicalities of presenting and analysing the pieces for analysis that I realised the aspect of discursivity required a specific place. The issue that presented itself was that the facticity or historic context of the pieces downplayed their content in itself.

Discursivity, as the level of analysis that I propose, demands a tailored space in which the attention remains focused on the meaning of the pieces. However, the presentation of the pieces required a contextual background. I realised that there were two simultaneous contexts. The use of specific images and documents from multiple actors represented a challenge. One context involved those factual or ‘original’ circumstances and motives that influenced the actor to produce a specific image or document, while the other context was the intertextuality and meaning invested in these objects. My strategy, in consequence, is to split the context surrounding the pieces for analysis. As implied above, I have a given context, the immediacy of the piece, and I have a ‘created’ context when all the pieces together made up a new analytical body. Because of this, I propose to consider an *immediate and intended* level. In short, the first step involved the consideration of the piece (image or quotation) in its immediacy. Hence, the images and written sources are isolated from the primary context. Therefore, it is the content of the element considered that makes it analytically relevant.

In the case of discourse theory, the challenge posed by the macroscopic feature lies in having multiple and overlapping contexts (Howarth, 2005: 337). I argue that this ‘dual-contextual’ feature is complementary and not supplementary. In addition to the macro-textual and macro-contextual dimensions discussed earlier, some discourse theory scholars consider that this perspective also engages with micro and macro axes that together cover the scope and content of the material analysed. These axes complement each other when, in the macro space, the analysed practices and regimes have a direct relation with particular texts or phrases on the micro level (Glynos et al., 2009: 5, 34). This explains the complementary feature of ‘togetherness’ of the dual context. The immediate context corresponds to the ‘micro-level’, which, in my proposal, forms a layer of background that helps to situate and present the pieces for analysis. Thus, in terms of the intended context, the issues at stake are the discursivity and intertextuality involved with the pieces for analysis. Frank Tonkiss explains one of the aspects of an analysis within a discursive framework, “Rather than gathering accounts or texts so as to gain access to people’s view and attitudes, or to find out what happened at a particular event, the discourse analyst is interested in how people use language to construct their accounts of social world” (1998: 247-8).

In the second chapter, I explained that discursivity is the level of analysis that this dissertation proposes. Accordingly, my analysis focuses on the use of meaning grounding a vision of social objectivity. I mentioned that I am not considering a specific discourse but rather the accounts of social objectivity and discursivity that occur in the settings. This means that I am problematising the discursive dynamics and logics through the contextualisation of the settings. The intended context aims to articulate these accounts of social objectivity together. As such, the most significant idea to keep in mind is that this differentiation of two contexts was crucial to focus only upon discursivity. The intended context that I am proposing is the place where all the pieces are, articulated (literally) to form the analytical body of this dissertation. It is the particular content of the piece and its discursive placement in the ‘macro’ level when becomes relevant for this research. It is in this place where the connection of the pieces is appreciated from a macro perspective. It must be clear that it is the intended level where the analysis of the accounts of social objectivity takes place. In the same manner, I contend that it is in this context where intertextuality can be addressed. After splitting the context, I explain how to proceed in two simultaneous levels while presenting the content analysed. Each level involved specific challenges and considerations.

4.3.1 Dual levels and content

Developing and constructing an ‘object of study’ from ‘disparate empirical phenomena’ involve major analytical risks but also rewards. The challenge that I had was to define the way of presenting through the bi-contextual frame. The basic strategy that I consider resembles (distantly) Derrida’s move⁸⁹ of ‘bracketing’ the materiality of the object (Howarth, 2000a: 39), or in my argument, the immediacy of the pieces. This strategy allowed for my focus on the meanings that were invested in them— namely, the discursivity reflected in the intended level. According to Howarth, Derrida’s aims to direct attention towards the textuality of the piece rather than focus on the author’s context in more detail.

In practice, the point of entry, while presenting the piece of analysis in the settings, is the immediate context. With this, I aim to provide some general references related to the actor and/or the piece of analysis presented. These general references serve as a layer of background for the immediate context. It has a relevant part because it offers cohesiveness to the presentation of each piece of analysis and to the background of each conceptual scenario. In the intended context, I proceed with the strategy of ‘bracketing’ the meaning expressed in the content of the pieces for analysis. This conveys de-contextualising and re-contextualising in a double move. I complement this move by considering the following, “[O]ne way of looking at deconstruction, then, is to see it as an exploration of the ‘singularity’ of the event as an inquiry into how we might come to terms with the event’s uniqueness and unpredictability...” (Clark, 2003: 32).

I understand and equate this singularity with the meaning that ‘makes’ the pieces for analysis. Hence, I need to isolate or ‘bracket’ the piece in its immediacy and displace it to the intended context. This stance echoes some poststructuralist thoughts, “[d]isposed to undertake systematic, expanding analyses that look to particulars in terms of the puzzles to which they speak [...] The poststructuralist wants to know what is repeated, what structures and practices reappear in dispersed sites [...]” (Ashley, op. cit.: 278-9). Ashley’s idea includes two significant issues: particularity and dispersion. These issues appeared in the ‘mutual development’ of my analytical context. I had very specific images and written sources belonging to a ‘natural’ context. This particularity is a limitation if the piece is addressed in its immediacy or ontic level. At a distance, all the images and written sources appear dispersed, unrelated and, at a certain level, opposed.

⁸⁹ Derrida makes this movement from Husserl’s term of *epoché* but rejects the transcendental dimension not only of this term but for the whole phenomenological frame of Husserl (Bass, 2005: xxi). Derrida’s criticisms for this appear in *Speech and Phenomena, and other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of the Sign* (1973) and *Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry* (1978).

The recurrent practice in this case is the fixation of meaning, the pretention of achieving a legitimate account of the world, the construction of identities in antagonistic ways, the logocentric representation of 'us' and the exclusion of certain group. In this case, I will address the singularity of each piece of analysis through its displacement and re-contextualisation in the intended context.

This movement surely implies the formation of a 'new analytical body'. In addition, this is where my take on discursivity must be located. The intended context corresponds to the place I am placing my reading of the singularity of each piece of analysis and meaning invested in the signifiers and the visual representations. In this case, the intended context is the last element of the working frame, and it is the place in which all of the conceptual references will be used. In this way, the analysis that I will conduct on the intended level will bring those new interpretations to all of the elements articulated at this level. I contend that the various connections among the pieces for analysis will be evident and appreciated when I present and address the content in the analytical chapters. The other significant matter is that in certain research strategies (case study), the selection of research material is an element within a specific confined context that becomes a valid reference for the topic studied (Spencer, 2011: 64).

4.4 Visual methods

On this concern, I consider the proposal of Gillian Rose on visual methodologies as the best option⁹⁰ of the variety of perspectives that provide guidelines for visual analysis. Rose offers a comprehensive selection of methods⁹¹ that can be applied according to the interests and theoretical dispositions of the researcher. The aspects and concepts that this scholar proposes share similarities with, for example, social semiotics.⁹²

⁹⁰ For instance, see: Bleiker 2015.

⁹¹ This is the list of methods included and the visual material that cover: compositional interpretation (fine art paintings, or video games and films), content analysis (for quantifying a great number of images), semiology (advertisement, fine arts, films), psychoanalytical perspectives (films and mass media), discourse analysis I (still and moving images for example illustrations, photographs, paintings), discourse analysis II (institutions that display visual images like museums and art galleries), ethnographic studies or audience studies (television audiences), and photo-documentation (video, photography, collage, maps and drawings) (Rose, op. cit.: 45).

⁹² In the case of social semiotics, I considered that the technical and precise analysis performed with the concepts and analytical tools could not be applied in this research due to the number of images included in the analysis. Social semiotics is more productive as a method for a reduced number of images.

Nonetheless, in order to apply a practical but consistent strategy to analyse the images, I avoided mixing concepts and notions from other perspectives. As such, there is no 'visible' relation between discourse theory's conceptual frame and Gillian Rose's visual perspectives. For instance, the only analysis combining discourse theory and visual analysis (Cuevas Valenzuela, 2008) does not specify a visual methodology. However, as I will present afterwards, Rose presents a methodology based on discourse as a main reference. I consider that there are points in common that can be used for the overall textual analysis. To clarify, I do not intend to 'appropriate' Rose's visual methods as part of poststructuralism. In fact, her book does not mention this perspective or discourse theory. Yet, there is a certain 'affinity', as one method she proposes is based on a Foucauldian stance on discourse. I also follow the argument that no one method of visual analysis can grasp all the complexities of images (Bleiker, 2015: 877). Therefore, I take her suggestions and include them in my overall analytical approach.

Rose suggests a "critical visual methodology" to analyse visual material; this means considering the cultural significance, social practices and power relations that are related to the visual material. According to this author, three criteria are necessary for this methodology: recognising the importance of images and carefully looking at them; considering the social conditions and effects of visual objects; and contextualising the position of the research in reference to the images (ibid.: 16-7). In practice, this critical approach follows the creation of conceptual entities and the implication of images that articulate the meaning in these entities. More specifically, one of the tasks of the approach is to differentiate the social effects of the different visions that give an account of the social world. In this way, it is possible to understand the diversity of visions, the ways of seeing the world, and the forms of visibility in which these ways are enacted (ibid.: 10). In the general framework, Rose proposes a focus on visual images within three sites: the site of production, the site of the image (content) and the site where images reach the audience.⁹³ The interpretations of visual images occur in these three sites (ibid.: 19). For my analytical concerns, I will focus on the site of the image because it is the most relevant for the issues of discursivity and textuality. By focusing on this site, I can develop a more detailed view of the general content (meanings and/or symbols) of the images. Rose explains that "the second site at which an image's meanings are made is the image itself" (ibid.: 27). With this site, I can establish the main focus (the meaning) while addressing the visual material; the aim is to evaluate the content of the image.

Rose also argues that within these sites are three different aspects defined as "modalities". In these modalities, a critical understanding of the images develops. The

⁹³ Rose (ibid.: 19) refers to this as "audiencing".

technological modality is closely related to the site of production because it details the process of creation and the display location of the visual material. The following is the compositional modality, which focuses on the specific material, the qualities of a visual object or the elements that constitute an image. Compositionality considers the formal strategies used in the image, such as content, colour and spatial organisation. Finally, the social modality considers the range of economic, social and political relations, institutions and practices that concern the images (ibid.: 19-20). From the modalities Rose proposes, I consider that the compositional and the social are the most useful for the analysis. Each modality will deal with a specific issue through the analysis. Sites and modalities are interrelated, and they can be used together in the analytical process. The site of image is very close to the compositional modality because the visual meanings and the descriptions of the content are addressed. This site points to the structure of the image as the most important feature to observe. It also considers the genre of the visual materials. The site of audiencing considers the contextual moment where the image is mobilised and the experience of the viewer.

My choice is to work within the site of image and the compositional and social modalities as the main references in my analysis. This means that the sites of production, audiencing and the technological modality⁹⁴ are not considered in the analysis. My explanation is that the main focus of this work is closer to the features these modalities provide. I prefer to focus on these references because including all the aspects and perspectives that deal with visual analysis conveys more ‘technical difficulties’. I refer to establishing delimitations for the research material that affect the consistency of the whole dissertation. The methodological choices need to maintain a direct connection with the ontological and theoretical base (ibid.: 42). In practice, the consideration of the approach to the images, or sites and modalities in this case, directly connects to discourse theory’s arguments about meaning and textuality. Therefore, I will use the framework of sites and modalities as a point of entry for the visual analysis.

With the compositional modality, it is possible to address the arrangement of the elements within the visual material. In the social modality, I will consider those issues expressed in the images that appeal to social and political concerns. Rose mentions social difference, but she does not mention social and political identities as issues to be considered for analysis. Nevertheless, I consider that these issues fit perfectly within this modality. While both modalities will be widely applied, I am mostly focused on social modality because I can include many of the concepts of discourse theory. Modalities and sites are ‘meta-references’ to consider along with the methodologies that Rose proposes.

⁹⁴ This includes the technical aspects used in the production of the image.

4.4.1 Selected approaches

I mentioned that Rose offers different approaches to engage with visual materials. From these options, I selected compositional interpretation and discourse analysis I (DA-I) as the actual methods to address the visual material. These approaches are complementary to the site and modalities referred before. Compositional interpretation and DA-I give the analytical tools to work with visual materials. According to Rose, the possibility of combining methods is recommended to develop a wider and more concise perspective in the analytical task. Hence, the basic idea of having two approaches is that the combination of both gives different aspects of the visual material. These methods follow up the site and modalities and all together give a comprehensive frame to work with. In concrete terms, with the compositional interpretation approach I will 'break down' the elements of the image describing features and pointing their relevance. The second approach, termed as discourse analysis I, opens the possibility to consider intertextuality and to map the accounts of social objectivity. These are the main issues to consider from these approaches.

4.4.2 Compositional interpretation

Rose's develops the compositional interpretation approach following the practice used in painting (in the tradition of fine art). In any case, this is not restricted to this kind of material. As I have said before, the main focus of this approach is the content and disposition of the elements within the image. The compositional interpretation approach is very useful to establish a first contact with the images and to start with the description afterwards. The initial step of the compositional interpretation is to consider the technologies and production of the image; these two issues will be reflected, to some degree, in the contextualization of the image presented in the analysis. The context includes the identification of the actor involved in the production or depiction of the image. This approach is particularly useful in breaking down the image and finding basic characteristics of the elements and objects (size, dimension, brightness), and their spatial organisation (distribution, angles). In the case of the depiction of persons, the point is to describe their age, gender, ethnicity or any other feature (actions, or physical expressions) portrayed. It is also concerned with the expressive content projected to the image (e.g. what moods or feelings are evoked). Naturally, matters of lighting and colours used (hues, saturation) are also assessed. One central aspect is the focal point or main element that stands out within the image (ibid.: 58-75).

These are the main issues that can be analysed with the compositional interpretation method; in my opinion, there is no a hierarchical organisation of what issue could be considered more relevant than other. The spatial organisation and the focal point may get more attention *per se*. However, all the elements and issues mentioned above are valuable references for the description. Consequently, I deem pertinent to appeal a holistic approach in the description of the images while bringing these issues according to the content of each piece analysed. For instance, one way of addressing the composition of the image is to distinguish the chromatic arrangement. The realistic status of an image or its authoritative stance are related to the colour scheme used in the content (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Some colours will highlight a distinctive feature, symbolise differences or give privilege to certain meanings over others. In the evaluation and description of the visuals, it must be considered that the spatial organisation of the elements, the diversity of contrasts in the chromatic arrangement, or the exaltation or dramatization of a specific aspect give a certain identity to the content depicted.

In this way, the compositional interpretation approach opens different possibilities for the analysis. It is the first step to start with the description of the visual material. The approach has the advantage that is open to work with all sort of images despite their genre or type. This is a flexible approach that does not require a technical expertise like other visual methodologies demand (e.g. semiotics). It offers a practical engagement with the images while applying some technical assessment. In the practical application of this approach, I will address the focal point and the topics or events happening in the image, describe the objects or persons depicted, and find the relation among the elements. This part of the description will be useful to notice important signifiers and focal points and follow the possible relation between these elements. I will consider the focal points as those visual elements that are constantly appealed in the accounts of social objectivity.

4.4.3 Discourse analysis I

The method that complements the compositional interpretation is what Rose calls *discourse analysis I* (DA-I). The name already indicates the scope and characteristics of the method, but Rose's proposal considers two versions of this type. Following Foucault's view of discourse, these two approaches do not exclude each other but they offer different goals for research. DA-I aims to study the ways discourses are articulated in visual images and verbal texts in specific discourses. The other option, *Discourse analysis*

II, addresses material practices of institutions (e.g. spatial distribution of elements in a museum) or practices (surveillance or institutional technologies). Rose's proposition for two versions of visual discourse analysis makes a selective and general use of Foucault's work. Rose argues that there is not a clear difference between these versions. These approaches share the ideas that visibility is a form of discourse and that specific visualities makes certain things perceptible in a way, while others are excluded (Rose, op. cit.:191-5). However, the objectives and results of the analysis differ in the scope.

The approach that Rose develops based on Foucault's ideas includes issues of intertextuality, the role and impact of a discursive formation, the constitution of regimes of truth and the exercise of power/knowledge (ibid.: 190-3). As seen, these are the basic notions behind any discursive approach. These notions imply to consider how these formations work as 'regimes of truth' and the circumstances of how power/knowledge is involved in the formation of meaning. From this basic stance, the overall scope of DA-I opens the possibility to understand how images perform and make specific accounts of social reality and how discourses are structured and produce a particular kind of knowledge through the visual aspect. This also means to consider how images aim to appear as real and natural accounts. (ibid.: 195-6). I have stressed that this aspect is included in the accounts of discourse theory, logocentrism, and the politics of representation. The power issues involved in the depiction and articulation of meaning is the central feature of this approach. In the broad conceptual perspective, the idea of discourse becomes extremely relevant to address formulations of representations, the production of meaning, and the constitution of identities and social relations (Campbell, 2013: 234-5).

Rose gives examples of cases in which the discursive construction of people in a given spatial context that can be understood through images.⁹⁵ Considering these examples, Rose introduces some aspects to apply with the DA-I framework. One way to address the discursive elements within the visual material is by focusing in the rhetorical organisation. This organisation implies, for example, to recognise how social difference is presented, the way a discourse defines principal elements and the relations established among them, or how categorizations are mobilized (Rose, op. cit.: 209-10). I consider that the issues of social difference and the definition of principal elements are relevant for my analysis and they keep a solid connection with discourse theory's concepts. Social difference becomes a central aspect to consider because issues of identity and subjectivity can be discussed under this concept. In terms of subjectivity,

⁹⁵ The example presented in the book is the representation of the East End of London in the 1880s and the ways different social groups were represented in visual material (Rose, op. cit.: 209-219). This example is not an original analysis made by Rose.

this includes categories as gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic conditions and these can be addressed through social difference. In my opinion, this also can include expression of belonging such as cultural identification, national identity or political affiliation. In the same way, identity formation and the logics of equivalence and difference can be observed with the categories or expressions of belonging that I referred before. Considering the social modality, and more specifically thinking in subjectivity, it is necessary to look for possible links between the subjects depicted or portrayed in the image with the viewers. This depends on the body language, facial expressions, eye contact, or textual message in the piece (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

The following feature to reflect on is the productivity and level of persuasion that any discursive material aims to achieve. The productivity of the discourse refers to the way words, signifiers in this case, or images are given detailed meanings (Rose, op. cit.: 213). This is what Laclau and Mouffe define as fixation of meaning. The main issue, naturally, is the production of social objectivity and subjectivities. However, it is necessary to consider the absences or invisibilities that are related to the productivity of the discourse. Representing an issue from a particular perspective would imply that other views on the same topic could be deliberately silenced in order to achieve a dominant role. In consequence, the productivity of discourse is related to the levels of persuasion that the images attempt to produce. This has a close relation to the effects of truth that the discourse aims to reach. In this case, this can be done by reviewing the claims of certainty or naturalisation by which a discourse works (ibid.: 215). For this, it is necessary to refer to the persuasive strategies involved in the image. One example of this is the disagreement over the same issue, and the different visual representations, or misrepresentations, which give an account of the issues. Each representation will contend as the legitimate version persuading the audience on their side.

For the visual analysis, it is necessary to find if the elements (signs or symbols) transfer specific qualities to other. This is a common practice in advertisement. Some of the objects depicted in the image have qualities that are taken for granted (ibid.: 123-4). In other words, there is a transference of qualities that affects the levels of persuasion and legitimacy of the message. In relation to this, concerns upon authority are also part of DA-I. In addition, this situation points to the way authority is created in visual discourses. For instance, many times the discourse of an actor (e.g. international organisation, religious institution) gets more recognition and influence due the position and role in a given context.

To sum up the issues related to DA-I, this method pays attention to the intertextual connections of the visual material addressing cultural significance, social practices, and power relations involved. DA-I is a useful frame to review issues of legitimacy, the

naturalization of meaning and claims about truthfulness and the productivity of a discourse. It has a direct connection with the site and modalities explained before because all pay attention to the image as a social produced object. Furthermore, it keeps a consistent relation with many concepts of discourse theory. As seen, this method complements the compositional interpretation with a theoretical focus.

4.5 The written sources

In this final section, I introduce some of the analytical aspects considered for the written sources, namely, the documents and quotes. I stated before that, I do not consider that these sources are ‘secondary’ to the visual material and that both types complement each other. In fact, documents are widely used in two of the settings for analysis. All the written sources were selected considering them as ‘exemplary documents’ (Howarth, 2005:337). This indicates that the selected documents represent a very relevant aspect of the issue or actor analysed.

For the written sources, I will apply some basics guidelines that are linked to the main concepts of discourse theory. David Howarth (2005: 341) considers three forms of textual analysis: the analysis of meaning in texts, the role of rhetoric and the construction and role of subjectivity. I will take as reference the first and the third forms in the next way. As I have explained through different parts, my concern is the discursivity coming out from the pieces and the conceptual settings. This will be done, basically, by following the articulation and formation of identity. In this way, the aim is to find the mechanisms fixating or producing meaning. The synchronic model will be the reference for choosing and reading the written parts explained above. Overall, synchronicity exposes the inner logic of a structure (Lundy, op.cit.: 71), that however is temporal and incomplete (Glynos and Howarth, 2007:141). This model works by linking the parts of the text analysed and presenting a reading of all the parts in a given example or case (Wæver, 2005). The model follows a qualitative stance, which gives priority to a reduced number of documents. This way of reading has similarities to the strategy of focusing in a specific aspect of the research material. In this case, I will address the written sources having in mind the scope of the analysis. In my approach, the analysis of the quotes from the written sources goes together with the analysis of the images.

5 ANALYTICAL CONTEXT

In this chapter, I will refer to the various elements that make the analytical context proposed. Firstly, I present the arguments to develop a context in which a discursive analysis can be applied. Afterwards, all of the concepts, the specific strategies and the analytical context's content and structure are detailed. Finally, I include explanations about the practicalities and general issues of the three analytical chapters. In each section, the relation of the elements and their relevance for the analytical task will be mentioned. The analytical context is the place in which the ontological, theoretical, strategies and analytical reference come together.

5.1 Grounding the context

As mentioned in Chapter 4, from a discursive perspective, the main strategy for the analytical task involves the researcher's constructing and delimiting of the cases under investigation (Glynos et al., 2009; Howarth, 2000; Jørgensen and Phillips, op. cit.: 154). Consequently, I follow the stance that Jørgensen and Phillips considers, in that, "a discourse is not something that the researcher finds in reality, rather, it is constructed analytically" (op. cit.: 146). On the other hand, the aspect of contextualisation is a core feature in this dissertation. I already explained the role of context in qualitative research (Hammersley, 2008). In my approach, the analytical context comprises the 'interventions' that I have made to adapt all the relevant concepts for the exploration of social objectivity, the level of analysis and the way the content of the research material is read and considered. As I have consistently noted, the working frame depends on the questions addressed during the research or on the researcher's theoretical perspective (Jørgensen and Phillips, op. cit.: 141).

The next issue to explain is about delimiting and addressing the aims of the analysis. Jørgensen and Phillips consider the following,

[t]he question of delimitation is determined strategically in relation to the research aims...treating the delimitation of discourses as an analytical exercise entails understanding discourses as objects that the researcher constructs rather than as objects that exist in a delimited form, ready to be identified and mapped. (ibid.: 143-4).

This discursive stance considers that the issue or object analysed is not given through experience; rather, it is constructed and studied in a particular theoretical framework. I consider that this stance is closer to the theory-driven approach (Marttila, 2016) detailed in Chapter 4. These two arguments are crucial for the logic and structure of this dissertation. I mentioned that scholars working with discourse theory framework typically follow the problem-driven strategy as the main way to address an empirical analysis. However, my approach differs from this strategy to some extent, and my analytical context aims to describe, understand, interpret and evaluate the objects of study that were created for this endeavour (Jørgensen and Phillips, op. cit.: 136-9).

Let us bear in mind that I do not include one specific discourse or case in a problem-driven approach, nor do I compare the actors producing the images and documents in a case study design. In my analytical context, the focus is on the description that will help to develop an understanding and explanation through the theorisation of the content analysed.

5.2 Analytical context: social objectivity through hegemony, antagonism, and heterogeneity

The analytical context comprises the contextualisation of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity as settings framed in a discursive perspective. My argument throughout this work is that by considering one aspect of these three concepts, it is possible to follow a specific configuration that arranges identities and notions of socio-political organisation. At the same time, it is fundamental to consider their interrelation. Henceforth, the question guiding the analysis concerns how the configuration of discourse and identity and the interrelation of the logics of equivalence and difference take place in these conceptual settings. The analysis will show how different actors within the aforementioned settings construct and articulate accounts of social objectivity and collective identities.

5.2.1 Analytical reference and strategy: visions of the world in three conceptual settings

With the three settings in place, the next step is to explain the element that works as an analytical reference. For this, I propose the discursive and visual representation of *the world* characterised through the ideas of a socio-political organisation. Considering the

world as an analytical reference is twofold procedure. First, ‘the world’ works as an abstraction of a social field. This abstraction includes the spatial reference where different “social worlds” are crystallised (Howarth, 2006: 118). Second, this analytical reference guided the selection of the research material included in the three settings.

On the other hand, my analytical strategy draws on Jørgensen and Phillips’ proposal that links together discourse theory’s concepts with specific issues such as the analysis of nodal points and myths as key signifiers in the organisation of discourse; the formation of chains of equivalence; and issues of collective identity, floating signifiers, antagonism and hegemony for conflict analysis (op. cit.: 50). Each of these suggestions focuses on one specific aspect; however, they all overlap. I argued that, for instance, the analysis of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity must be considered part of the same discussion. In this sense, looking for nodal points can imply confronting for two chains of equivalence for a floating signifier. This already implies a situation of antagonism and hegemony that also mobilises myths and social imaginaries.

Basically, Jørgensen and Phillips propose a strategy that considers “how discourses, identity and the social space respectively are organised discursively” (ibid). Their suggestion is to identify key signifiers and follow their articulation with other elements. Taking Jørgensen and Phillips’s proposal, the practicalities of my analysis start with the presentation of the research material through, what I named as, the immediate level. This level includes the description of the pieces for analysis. The presentation and description of the images and documents are complemented with information related to the actor involved or the historical context that concerns the piece. The description is the first step towards the pieces, and this will allow for the identification of the constitutive elements, signifiers and main elements in the images. The analysis resulting from the description and recognition of meaningful elements will open the intended level. In this latter level, I will theoretically analyse the findings. In practice, the content of the immediate and intended levels is not divided. The descriptions and theoretical explanations overlap, and they are entangled with the content. In the analysis, I will quote, fully or partially, the parts (paragraphs or phrases) where the notions or visions of social objectivity are expressed. In the case of the visual material, the analysis implies using compositional interpretation to outline the arrangement of the elements and rhetorical organisation to recognise inner features (e.g. spatial organisation or focal points). In the visual analysis, the compositional interpretation and DA-I method are applied simultaneously in the description.

This means that the first approach to the material will map the main signifiers and visual elements and show their relation. The following step is to address the configuration of discourse and identity according with the conceptual settings proposed.

This means to consider social objectivity as those visions and accounts of social and political organisation⁹⁶ and the logics of equivalence and difference as the possibilities in which discourse and identity can be configured. Concurrently, I will explain the articulation of signifiers (nodal points, floating signifiers, empty signifiers) and how the 'being of the object' is expressed referring to this as discursivity. Therefore, of special interest will be those signifiers (nodal points) and their articulation with other discursive elements that order the social field and construct collective identities I also will use the concepts of myths and social imaginaries, and the universal/particular dichotomy as explained by Laclau. All these concepts perform through my deconstructive reading of hegemony. In reference to this, Jørgensen and Phillips consider that "[d]iscourse analysis aims at the deconstruction of the structures that we take for granted; it tries to show that the given organisation of the world is the result of political processes with social consequences (ibid.: 48). This views guide my analytical task.

5.3 The analytical context at a glance

The analytical context encompasses the idea of working through a comprehensive poststructuralist stance and developing specific settings based on three central concepts of discourse theory. This idea of contrasting the concepts with different cases was a process of mutual constitution. I reflected on discourse theory's concepts while simultaneously thinking how socio-political actors articulate their discourses. The result is a frame that allows me to contextualise a theoretical aspect of the concepts and to explore social objectivity through three cases.

In this sense, to follow the construction of a hegemonic stance, it required an actor whose social and political project includes a collective identity and wide-ranging discourse in which antagonism is seemingly tamed. This was the logic applied when considering the UN as example. On the contrary, a situation of locked antagonism required analytically situating two contending accounts of the same issue. In this case, I considered the visual representation of peace to illustrate the logic of antagonism during the Cold War. Finally, a third situation involves a 'marginalised' element that creates a dislocation and engages in the two logics previously mentioned. This case is mirrored with the Zapatista movement in the sense of the influence that this movement had not only on its direct context but also globally. While having these cases in mind, I was thinking of the way discourse theory explains the equivalences and differences that

⁹⁶ These visions, for example, are forms of governance, the promotion of values and principles that guide individual or collective actions expressed in a project or by an actor.

affect identities and discourses and that all these discussions are missing in the field of Peace and Conflict Research.

In a general sense, the contextualisation works as a background in which is possible to follow the articulation of discourse and identity —from contrasting but complementary perspectives. I consider that this analytical context enables the combination and analysis of discourses and visual representations that are seemingly unrelated. This is possible because I am looking into the macro-discursive level but through singular pieces. In relation to all these arguments, I explain how this dissertation's content and analysis should be considered. I clarify this point by identifying the aspects this dissertation does not intend to cover. The analytical concern does not lie in the historical context, events or particularities of the actors that appear in the research material. It is neither a normative compendium of 'best solutions approach' to a given problem nor a historical reflection of the actors' trajectories and future actions. I do not minimise the complexities of the actors and the confrontation during the Cold War, but my analysis and discussion focus on another aspect. In the same line, I do not equate the Zapatista movement with the UN, comparing their actions and aims in 'the world'. It is pointless to compare them in their ontic organisation as isolated actors or cases. In addition, I am not considering what the strategic reasons and consequences were to publish a certain image during a certain historical context. This is meaningless because these analytical aims would imply a completely different approach. It is also necessary to clarify the timeframe in the content of the settings and research material. In the way I developed the analytical context, I did not intend to cover a fixed period or follow all of the events related to the actors or theme. Naturally, it is necessary to consider the different historical conjunctures that take place within the settings. This is addressed, in a general way, in the presentation of the research material.

In terms of the relational aspect of the discussion and analysis, these must be considered through the interrelation of the logics of difference and equivalence that keep the discussion and analysis open. I argue that by focusing on the discussion of these logics and considering discursivity and intertextuality, the relationality of the settings is grounded. Furthermore, one of the points that links the settings consists of the attempts to achieve a hegemonic stance, or what I called —the trajectory to claim the centre—.

I also contend that all the images and the quotations from the written sources can be analytically articulated together considering intertextuality, and my approach on discursivity. Discourse theory considers an interpretative stance for analysis and this includes an open standpoint of textuality concerning the research material. I have

characterised the research material as 'pieces for analysis'. By using the term pieces, I want to stress that it is the sum of all images and quotations that make a new analytical base. Intertextuality is a point of connexion because all the pieces bear meanings and notions that are used in different contexts.

Thinking through an intertextual frame, I realised the need to have a common discursive reference and a suitable example where the accounts of social objectivity could be visible through the perspective of the three settings. One of my 'observations' that inspired this work was the discursive representation and evocation of the 'world' in actors with social and political concerns. In these concerns, however, the 'world' appeared in their discourse as a place where the visions of social objectivity were projected. The visual representation of the world is an outstanding example of spatial and visual power (Westwood, 2002) that is displayed through accounts of social objectivity. It was fascinating to see how dissimilar actors discursively converged in this space even though the connection appeared inexistent. Moreover, its visual representation and/or symbolism within the discourse of local, national and international actors caught my attention in a definitive manner. This situation made me consider the divergence among social and political projects, as well as the constant reference to a stable and shared foundation for their specific projects.

Even so, I observed that the visual and discursive dimensions of these actors were strikingly similar; yet, they were also contradictory and antagonistic. For instance, the visual or rhetorical representations of the world, with the permanent use of shared symbols and mythical references, made me realise the importance of the fixation of meaning and the politics of representation involved. The cases and actors chosen, despite their different political and social positions, refer to shared notions of a social field or space of representation in need of a political project. Furthermore, in mostly every actor reviewed and piece of analysis collected the claims of transcendence and myths were the foundation that kept the vision of social objectivity coherent and legitimate. All these visions mobilised universal notions of social and political organisation from a very different perspective. In all these visions, the visual representation of the world was extensively used. In many posters, official publications, drawings and painted murals, different actors, at unrelated levels, visually expressed their views of social order and subjectivity. This was a key issue to consider this type of material as a source of information.

To sum up, the complexities of the whole conceptual frame, the analytical context and research material needed a tailored plan considering all the characteristics of these elements. In this sense, the structure of this dissertation was continually adapted and reconfigured due to the complexity mentioned. The first and third settings have one

actor as a main reference, while the second follows a thematic outline. In the way the construction of the settings took place, I realised that it was more important to find a flowing track of presenting the research material to address the discussion of the respective concepts.

In the following three chapters, I will show how the *world* looks like from a poststructuralist political theorising and analysis of discourse and identity. Let us start with the exploration of social objectivity through hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity.

6 UNITING THE WORLD AND THE QUEST FOR HEGEMONY

This relation, by which a certain particular content overflows its own particularity and becomes the incarnation of the absent fullness of society is exactly what I call a hegemonic relation

Ernesto Laclau

The epigraph includes the basic logic behind hegemony. In other words, it includes the sedimentation of a particular discourse that has achieved a stable status. In the line with this thinking, I present the first chapter in which the proposed setting is the contextualisation of a specific aspect of hegemony. The main analytical concern is to expose the formation of discourse and identity on a hegemonic base through the logic of difference. This contextual setting develops by considering a specific actor or political project and follows it through a discursive frame in the construction of the hegemonic position. My analytical argument for this setting is that the hegemonic position can be examined through a wide spectrum of social demands while having a common account of political organisation. On this matter, it is considered that a discourse has reached hegemony when “its distinctive conception of the world has developed into an inter-subjectively shared and socially largely taken-for-granted horizon of intelligibility” (Marttila, 2015: 52). I consider that the United Nations fulfils my argument, for instance, by looking at the foundations and goals that underpin the accounts of social objectivity for which this actor stands. The UN⁹⁷ discourse includes issues such as peace and security (armed conflicts, disarmament), human development (human rights, population, health issues) and the world’s problems (environment, hunger, natural resources). Hence, the articulation of all these issues involves the construction of accounts of social objectivity and subjectivity.

For instance, discursive hegemony can be framed as a political cycle: a moment of crisis in which other contending discourses weaken the established order; these

⁹⁷ Even though there is a substantial amount of literature on the UN, I shall focus on those analyses close to discourse theory’s scope.

discourses offer myths as part of the solution to the critical moment organising different identities around them. One discourse takes a more solid stance due to the social demands and its association with previous institutions. In the process of consolidating a dominant position, a frame of intelligibility is developed in order to incorporate the networks of subject positions. The final part of the cycle is that the new hegemonic discourse will arrange a new disposition of identities with the intention to diminish antagonist forces against the new order (Smith, 1998: 167). The hegemonic intervention reaches a culminating point when meaning and practices are naturalised (a specific objectivity or articulation), and a new process of institutionalisation takes place (Torfing, 1999: 102-3). Under discourse theory's conceptual frame, the analysis of hegemony involves different aspects and contexts. The basic approach includes the development of a common identity and a socio-political project by adding different elements and interests. Following the argument of negativity as a constitutive aspect of identity, the production of hegemony can be traced with the consolidation of a collective identity in contrast to an external element. Using the nation state as a context, the analyses have demonstrated how the consolidation of a hegemonic stance implies a specific articulation of agents and signifiers (Howarth, 2000b on the Chartist movement in South Africa); and the way two sides contend in a setting of bipolar hegemony (Palonen, 2009 on political polarisation and populism in Hungary).

Analytically, hegemony has also been studied through a deconstructive reading of the political frontiers within a society deeply divided and confronted (e.g. South Africa). On one side, the analysis exposed the genealogical aspect of how a hegemonic position was articulated on some shared interests that nevertheless involved contingent identities (Afrikaans and English-speaking South Africans) that maintained contradictory positions (Norval, 1996: 47). These contractions, among other external (international pressure on the political regime), and internal situations (multiplication of forms of resistance), contributed to the collapse and demise of the hegemonic status (ibid.: 301). On the other hand, and as commonly expressed in conflicts permeated by nationalism, particular myths and imaginaries are mobilised to justify and reach legitimacy. These myths and imaginaries are a core element of the unity of any account of social objectivity. With these concepts, one is able to see how myths provide a foundation while imaginaries project a horizon for absolute representation (Çelik, 2000 on Kemalist discourse in Turkey). In a similar fashion, the construction of hegemony has been traced through the mixture of heterogeneous elements that consolidate a popular nationalist project based on myths, the reference to the antagonist-other and the figure of a strong leader (Salecl, 1994: 214-5 on Serbian nationalism). Particularly important to the consolidation is the role of myths and imaginaries, as both issues are a significant part

of hegemony (Norval, 1996). Regarding the transition of myth to imaginary, the former implies a particular account (used at the moment of foundation), and the latter is the wider reference that orders the social field (ibid.: 9).

In the case and actor that I propose for this chapter, the UN's discourse on terrorism and drugs has been analysed considering the internal struggles of its members and the consolidation of hegemony. In this sense, a discourse theoretical approach to hegemony provides a different understanding of power processes beyond coercion (Herschinger, 2012: 67). This analysis is based on the logics of equivalence and difference to understand the order of the discursive space, the construction of a particular antagonism and a 'Self' regarding terrorism and drug-trafficking (ibid.:75). The UN has been also studied through the representational strategies and discourses. For example, the ideological factor ("disciplinary liberalism") in peacekeeping operations is regarded as a sign of hegemonic intervention that also conveys a visual simulation (Debrix, 1999: 27-8).

The analysis planned in this setting shares some of the aspects included in these studies, but it has different aims. In the case of the UN, my approach is adapted to the dissertation's analytical context and starts from the final part of the hegemonic cycle previously mentioned. I do not follow the process of dispute but rather the consolidation of hegemonic practices that outspread a discourse in new contexts and identities (Åkerstrøm Andersen, op. cit.: 108-110). In this setting, I focus on "the expansion of one side that the negativity decreases" (Laclau and Mouffe, op. cit.: 133-4). To address the analytical argument, I will show how the logic of difference develops through the articulation of signifiers into an all-encompassing vision of social objectivity. In this case, the logic to which I refer covers as many demands as possible. In this setting, the UN appears as the actor that is trying to give order to a socio-political space. The different aspect of my analysis is that antagonism is not 'visible' *per se*. My contextualisation tries to show, through a deconstructive reading, the ways hegemony implies the naturalisation and normalisation of meaning. The analytical strategy does not focus on a specific discourse or political case of hegemony; instead, it aims to expose the whole articulation in the macro-contextual level. Secondly, I only discuss the logic of difference because there are not two sides engaging through a chain of equivalence. In the case of identity, I will look inside of the "we, the peoples of the United Nations" to understand how this identity is conformed. This means recognising a wide range of actors at different levels that are part of what can be considered as the 'UN identity'.

6.1 Making up the setting of hegemony

The proposal to study the United Nations' account of objectivity reflects part of the historic situation that influenced its foundation. According to some analyses, it is possible to consider this actor from a teleological point of view pursuing an end (Falk et al., 1991:138). My analytical proposal develops from the social and political objectives that were given to the UN and the whole account of social objectivity that these objectives represent. This can be considered and followed as a hegemonic project with a role to fulfil. Naturally, the contextual conditions at the moment of its foundation determined the grounds, principles and priorities assigned to this actor. From a discursive perspective, it is also an example of hegemony in the sense that the discourse has a foundational view of social objectivity with goals, values and ideals that are recognised as universal. Peace and security were a priority in its foundation; yet the UN Charter includes economic, social, cultural and humanitarian issues. The universal feature of the project also includes the different 'identities' that conform to it. The conjunction of all these issues forms the discursive baseline for the hegemonic stance that I propose to study.

The setting of hegemony develops in these sections:⁹⁸

1. An organisation for the world
2. Issues and conditions of the world
3. We (some of the peoples of the world)
4. One (future) world

I considered three aspects for the analysis of accounts of social objectivity in a hegemonic context. First, it is necessary to look at the origins of the project. Specifically, I focus on the foundations underpinning the project and the prospects of social and political arrangement attached to this. This aspect reveals the aims and also the boundaries and limitations of the project. The first, second and fourth sections deal with this and with the ways this actor embodies certain visions of world order in the discourse. The next aspect consists of recognising how a chain of difference establishes identity formation and the articulation of signifiers. This issue will be followed through all four parts, but the issue of identity and subjectivity receive special attention in the third part. I will also refer to the myths and imaginaries that factor into a hegemonic stance. In the opening section, the aim is to provide an overview of the UN as an actor

⁹⁸ The sections are organised by topics and do not follow a timeline.

and as a socio-political project that develops into a hegemonic position. My interest is to show the way the foundations of the project appear in the discourse and to expose how meaning is ascribed to the nodal points and other signifiers. The second section involves the discursive representation of different topics that show the expansion of the account of objectivity in the social field. In the third section, the focus is on how different social groups are appealed to and presented as part of the common identity. To conclude, the notion of 'future' provides a basis to analyse one specific dimension related to the hegemonic context- myths and imaginaries.

I consider that all the content presented in the four sections cover basic elements that conform to a hegemonic discursive stance. The research material covers, in general terms, issues related to the environment, hunger, peace and disarmament, the population, subjectivities and violence, among others. Thus, the point of this chapter is neither to address the UN's history and its operational structure in full nor to evaluate the policies, programmes or political negotiations in which the UN has failed. In the analysis that I am suggesting, it is pointless to recommend what can be done to improve it.⁹⁹ The official documents included for analysis are the Charter of UN, the Millennium Declaration, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a specific paragraph in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All the images presented were published by the UN and associated agencies.

6.2 An organisation for the world

This setting, and the exploration of discourse and identity, begins with the foundations that ground the whole account of social objectivity. Thus, the analysis starts with a specific reference to the Charter of UN. In this conceptual setting, the Charter is the foundational reference that guides the rest of the elements into a hegemonic stance. Noticeably, the circumstances and context that preceded the establishment of the UN are inscribed in the foundations and goals of the organisation. Consequently, this context has a substantial influence on the account of social objectivity that this actor articulates and represents. Only the Introduction and Chapter I of this document¹⁰⁰ are mentioned in order to locate the foundations of the project. It is in these two parts where I find the first relevant points for the analysis of hegemony.

⁹⁹ Hence, I do not consider presenting the organisational schemes, agencies, bodies and their activities.

¹⁰⁰ The rest of the Charter focuses on explanatory, operative and administrative issues.

The Introduction comprises three paragraphs in which the notions of equality, justice, tolerance and freedom are referred to as necessary conditions for the basic coexistence of persons and nations. By mentioning the horrors of war, it stresses a humanist dimension of tolerance and unity that supports economic and social development among peoples and countries. The famous “WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS” represents the first call of the collective identity promoted. Afterwards, the second paragraph reads as follows,

to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples

In Chapter I, Article 1 explains the four purposes of the UN. The main priority is the prevention, maintenance and settlement of situations affecting international peace and security. Point 2 of this article includes this statement,

To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace

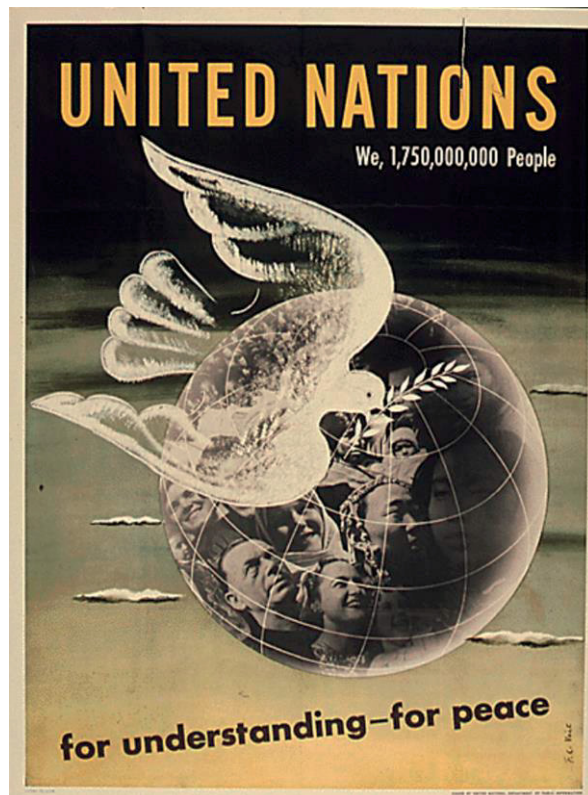
Article 2 mentions the principles guiding the organisation—explicitly, the sovereign equality of all the Members; the fulfilment of Members’ obligations; the peaceful settlement of disputes; a refraining from threats and the use of force; cooperation and assistance for UN in the prevention or enforcement of actions in peace and security issues; and respect for national sovereignty.

In these two quotations, it is possible to see the first views of social objectivity that are grounded in some central notions. From the discursive perspective and in the context of hegemony addressed in this chapter, these notions are relevant due to the type of signifiers used and the purposes they have. The notions of unity, universal peace, equality, tolerance, and freedom become the recognisable foundations that ground the ontological core of the UN. I use the term ‘ontological’ because they are placed as ends in a teleological dimension and are not presented in their ontic dimension of specific practices. Alternatively, I consider that, in terms of discourse theory, these can be regarded as nodal points because they have a privileged position from which more signifiers are attached in the expansion of discourse. At the same time, they become the mythical base that gives certainty to the project.

I assert that two hegemonic moves are detectable with the reference to the universality of equal rights that is simultaneously projected onto persons and nations.

This means that a line of influence in two levels is traced simultaneously. It is a hegemonic move, in that one foundation makes a connection between social and political elements—in this case, a person and the actors at the international level. As a result of this, the second move also implies that a common identity, including different units (the UN as project, the member states and “We the peoples of the United Nations”), is formed. These are some of the first views that show the articulation of references that support and construct what can be distinguished as a hegemonic stance. In these references, there are some clear examples of what I call ‘accounts of social objectivity’, and these also show the discursive dynamics that I propose to study.

Having this ‘essential’ document as a background, I introduce the first visual representation in which the foundations and nodal points can be appreciated. This image is the first poster the UN (1946) published. Using the visual analytical perspective of compositional interpretation, it is possible to see the relation of the four basic, but significant, elements that make up the poster.

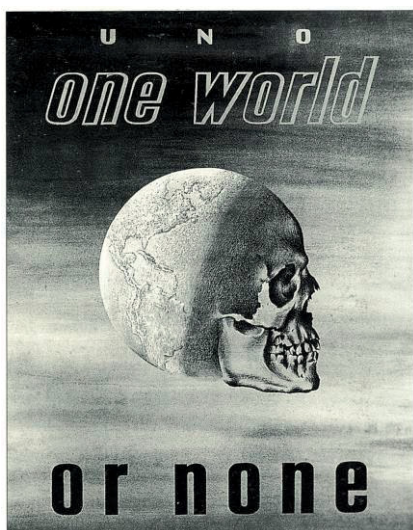


(1)

The text mirrors the first sentence in the preamble of the UN Charter: “The United Nations we, 1,750,000,000 people”, which is complemented by “for understanding ‘for peace’” at the bottom. The figure of the globe has latitudinal and longitudinal lines but without any land depicted. Within the globe, the faces of many persons show the ethnic diversity of the planet. The final element is the drawing of the dove holding an olive branch and flying over the globe.

The basic focal point offered in this image reflect the historical moment that required a message of unity based on the recognition of diversity. Unity and peace are presented as the foundations that the social actors represented must follow. As I noted with the UN Charter, the sense of belonging moves in two levels: one evokes “We, the peoples” (an identity framed as social) and includes the idea of a community of nations (that implies a political actor). The figure of the globe without depicted land reinforces the message of unity. This depiction conveys the idea of sharing a common stage in which humankind is not separated by any kinds of frontiers. Understanding, peace and union are placed as guidelines for coexisting in a post-war era. At first glance, identity formation does not seem to have an antagonist other *per se*. If all the population of the world and nations are the visible ‘we’, then there are no ‘outsiders’ or visible threats. At this level of communitarian engagement, the frame of identity avoids some problematic layers (e.g. national antagonism) in order to establish a leading project that finds recognition in all possible socio-political fields.

Some of these basic ideas are reflected in different ways in the next two illustrations.



(2)



(3)

These pieces belong to the UN poster of the year contest (1947-48), which included competitors from all over the world. The poster *One World or None* (left side) shows a grim scenario of the world. The dramatic setting of death and destruction is depicted showing an unwanted possibility for the world. In contrast, the other, titled *The United Nations* depicts a hopeful situation. The rhetorical organisation and focal point of this poster include a 'multinational tree' that is about to be planted to grow into a bigger community of nation states. The leaves of the plant, represented as flags, situate the actors behind the institutional effort. The member states, around 55 when the posters were published, are the ones represented in the flags. The opposing horizons in these pieces emphasise the states' responsibility to create positive conditions instead of war. The UN appears as the leader and place where the community can achieve strong cooperation to avoid major armed conflicts. The tree or plant symbolises the character of the new institution and the hope that is represented for the world.

It is worth noting that the use of national flags as focal points decreased throughout the years in the images used by the UN agencies. I think that one reason for this decrease was to avoid ongoing political or armed conflicts between countries. Moreover, the constant use of flags could hamper the work of the organisation. Nevertheless, in this image, the collective identity focuses on this level of actorness, and any political or social disputes were downplayed on behalf of the proposed unity. The flags together are an example of a chain of differences that is linked to a foundation. In terms of discursive visibility, both images can be read in terms of authority and level of persuasion. The issue of authority can be seen in the actor's legitimate role as an international organisation that tries to achieve a peaceful coexistence and develop a community of nations. On the contrary, the world would be the setting of war in the case that the new institution fails to achieve the main objectives assigned to it. Both images represent a dual situation that depends on one specific condition: the notion of unity.

The following image is the first poster commemorating United Nations Day (24th October); the poster was published in 1951. Three simple elements convey a clear message. The UN flag over a greyish sky is waving above the globe, and dozens of human silhouettes seem to walk over it. The spatial organisation of these images literally 'covers' the whole world. The globe does not show the continents, but it has the latitudinal and longitudinal lines. The silhouettes are in white and in three scales of grey (from lighter to darker shades); the figures resemble female and male adults, and some of them have a child.

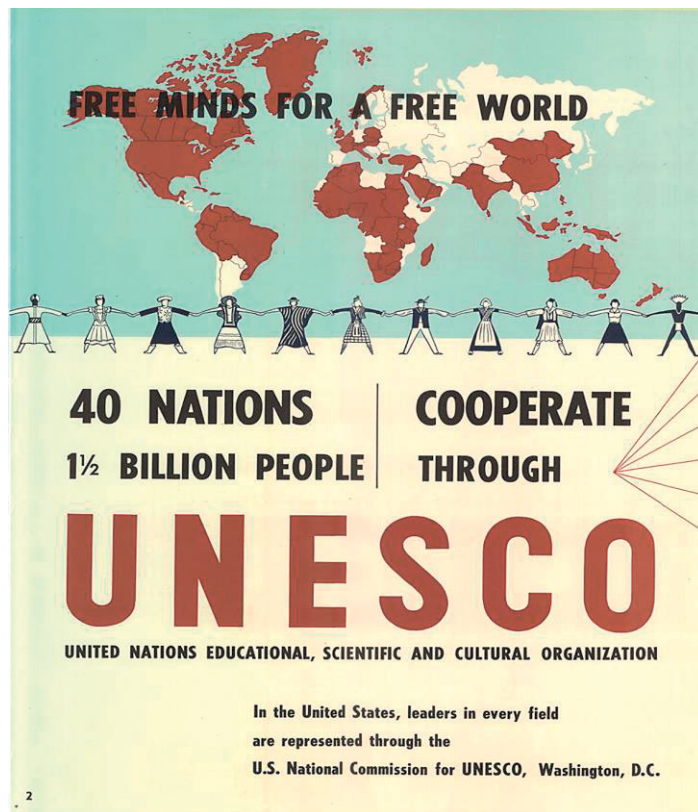


(4)

They are displayed as single individuals, couples and in groups of three or four members. The latter represent a ‘family’ (two adults with one or two children). The ‘couples’ and families are in a female-male arrangement (as hinted by what can be considered as a dress or skirt in the representation of the female silhouette). The text, in Spanish, reads, “Día de las Naciones Unidas” (United Nations Day). In this example, it is possible to point out how meaning and visual representation work in the foundation of any element within the social. On one side, the issue of identity remains in the same line as in the previous images presented. The rhetorical reference of unity continues in this example. A sense of inclusion portrays that any element at this level of social actors is relevant to the project. However, if we pay attention to the differentiation in the colours of the silhouettes, it resembles ethnic diversity, but there are no silhouettes of different shades together. This pattern is seen in such images representing a ‘family’ and in the ones with a single adult holding a child. In the case of the former, all are in a female-male arrangement. This arrangement already reveals another societal issue: It shows that it is possible to regard the elements as a family, in as much as no other arrangement or possibility is depicted. The contextual background, in this case the year of publication, reflects the frame of what the ‘normal’ depiction of a family was considered at the time. Along the same lines, the differentiation of what does or does not represent ‘female’ lies

in the visual representation of a performative element that fix an essence and distinguishes gender. In this image, the issue of social difference and identity are particularly linked. Continuing with the differentiation in the colours of the silhouettes, we can find again the idea of ‘diversity and homogeneity’ at the core of the social elements that constitute one layer of this actor and project. The human silhouettes try to limit or diminish certain social features (cultural or ethnical tensions) that could bring division to identity. I consider that the silhouettes embody a chain of difference in that their particularities are not aligned because of an antagonist-other.

In the last poster of this section, the idea of unity becomes problematic because some contradictions appear in the information presented. This piece, published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) office in the United States (circa 1950), shows a world divided into two sides.



(5)

With the title “Free Minds for a Free World” written at the top, the brown colour distinguishes some countries from others. However, this pattern does not show which countries were UNESCO members at that time.¹⁰¹ In a way, the colour of ‘UNESCO’ in the poster hints at this. In the phrase: “40 nations, 1½ Billion People Cooperate through UNESCO”, a specific division is visible. According to this logic, only the nations participating in the organisation are the ones capable of ‘being free’ or being representatives of the ‘free world’. Undoubtedly, the issue of decolonisation was the main concern at this time. This is one way that the formation of identity works. A specific practical situation (being a member) gives legitimacy to that actor. In comparison to the earlier examples, it differs as to what ‘being part of’ the collectivity entails. In this case, the message points to two separated sides of the world. A peculiarity found in this image is that the words “free world” appear directly over the Soviet Union. Freedom was never associated with the Soviet government in opponents’ discourse on this country.

In terms of discourse theory’s analytical concerns, the combination of one signifier implies that its identity is relational to the meaning invested and to the other signifiers attached. In this case, freedom has a quality and a specific content that change its identity. This is an example of discursive articulation linking specific features (free minds, cooperation) and actors (40 nations, 1½ billion people). In this image, the issues of social difference and authority level are linked to the legitimacy that the hegemonic actor gives to one of its elements (UNESCO). Therefore, from a hegemonic stance, it is possible to differentiate the status of other actors in the field (nations). On the other hand, a ‘human chain’, which features people standing together, represents the sentiment of ‘union’; the chain is inclusive of a multi-ethnic and cultural community (as suggested by the clothing of the human figures). This detail accentuates an all-inclusive identity, but at the same time, there is a contradiction because a feature is required for membership

In summary, the first set of images sets forth some of the basic movement when a hegemonic stance constructs a chain of difference from dissimilar units. An analysis that considers the discursive articulation and processes of identity formation reveals some of these moves. The foundational act epitomised in the UN Charter establishes the guidelines, limits and aims of the formation. The values considered as the ground of the project work when these are operationalised into the actor’s structure and then into the rest of social and political agents involved in the formation. In terms of discourse, the foundations start working when there is a link to a wide range of signifiers. Along with the aims and values, the discourse uses signifiers such as ‘unity’ and ‘peace’ as nodal

¹⁰¹ For instance, the Soviet Union was a founding member.

points and elements of identification. Unity then becomes the central factor that organises the social and political field at stake. In this way, hegemony develops the chain of difference adding more actors to the same project. Concurrently, the foundations are the myths through which the project develops. It is the abstraction and projection of these notions that make it possible to discuss their mythical dimension. Union and peace can be regarded as the myths holding the project.

Regarding identity formation, the logic of difference develops and forges the new identity. As explained with the analysed pieces, the process of identification under this hegemonic stance connects many layers of social organisation at different levels. This complex multi-layered formation needs to develop a common baseline in order to expand the chain of differential distinctiveness that is united in this project. For instance, from a top-down view, the new organisation implies a new institutional framework and the reinforcement of notions such as national sovereignty, self-determination, collective defence and universal human rights at the international level. With this operational and normative framework, the UN represents an original and legitimate version of identity from which a notion of community with a worldwide scope is developed. The process of identification mobilises a vision of a worldwide social and political community that goes down to the 'personal' level. The message appeals to a universal sense of belonging that supports a process of identification not only for states but for individuals as well.

The basic message of these pieces addresses the diminishment of any political antagonism in the entire social field. Considering the moment of crisis (World War II) from which this actor came about, controlling antagonism and conflict are the basic points that legitimise the whole project. Visually, the compositional interpretation shows different focal points that make the discursive articulation more accessible and recognisable. For example, the planetary dimension of the world helps to present the vision of a shared place where collectivity is privileged to avoid conflict and to solve problems. In the images presented, the representation of the world does not include a territorial division. It denotes, indirectly, a de-politicised form of organisation where political frontiers are not necessary anymore due to the 'natural' bond that humans (are expected to) have. The representation of the collective group highlights a sense of belonging that downplays a problematic coexistence fading in political or cultural frontiers. Other focal points are the combination of images representing human figures, photos of 'real people', national flags and the figure of the 'dove of peace'.

Moving from catastrophic to more idealistic settings, the second and third images are examples that present the contrast and the importance of the element of hegemony. The message indicates a transitional scenario: from the threat of a new war affecting the

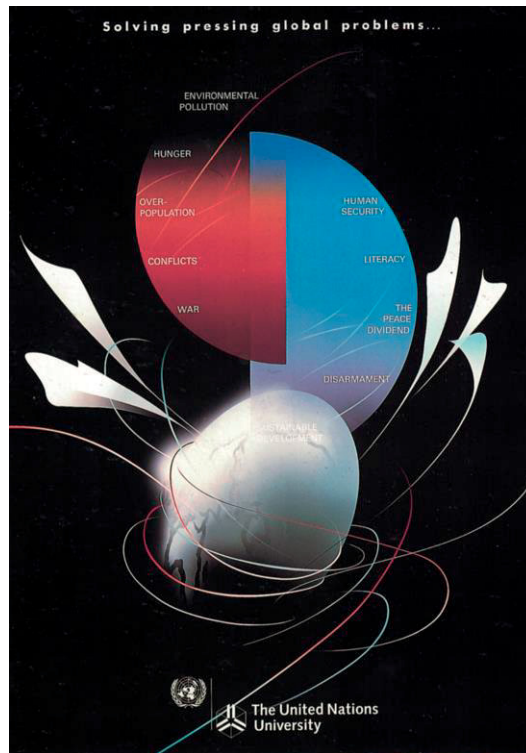
world to a multinational organisation that prevents this situation. In this way, the issue of legitimacy is linked to the issues of authority and the level of persuasion. The logic presented is that division and antagonism are not an option to configure the social space because the new identity demands unity and a peaceful coexistence. This type of representation brings about a dimension of universality in which all the social groups are considered. From the perspective of discourse theory, a hegemonic project aims to 'capture' the content of the universal. In this case, the idea of a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multinational community becomes a wide layer of legitimacy and support for the hegemonic stance.

6.3 Issues and conditions of the world

The second title covers a wide selection of topics and areas of action that are presented as the social demands that consolidate the project. My argument is that the hegemonic stance can be traced in this concurrence of activities and articulation of important signifiers to the UN's discourse. In this way, the aim in this title is to show the expansion of the vision of social objectivity with the discursive articulation of different topics and issues under the vision advocated.

The first piece exemplifies, in terms of discourse, an articulatory practise that connects a wide array of elements. The piece "Solving pressing global problems" was published by the United Nations University (UNU) in 1997. In a black background a bicolour elliptical figure is the main focal point. One reddish half is partially over the blue one. The red part reads: "environmental pollution, hunger, over-population, conflicts, and war". The positive contrast is illustrated with the blue part including: "human security, literacy, the peace dividend, disarmament, sustainable development".

These five elements combine a set of social demands that deepens the position of the hegemonic actor. The colour selection visually differentiates the nature and implications of these issues. An interesting chromatic combination presents a dual setting of possibilities that the world faces: A part of the dangerous red side is placed over the blue side. This hints that the problematic area is advancing, making the purple colour appear at the very bottom of the blue side. The element that complements the image is the figure of the earth with a shining point and circular or elliptical lines around it.



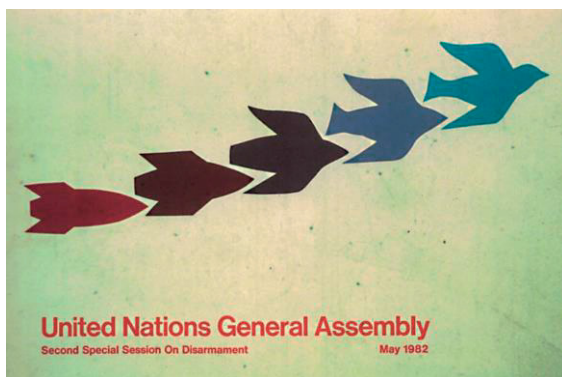
(6)

The spatial view, along with these lines, resembles movement or the earth's trajectory through the space. This is connected with the image's main idea about moving between the settings presented. The focal point here is the way the listed issues and dangers emphasise the importance and responsibility of the UN. These issues imply the expansion of the whole discourse with the articulation of more signifiers and demands. In this particular case, as the publisher is the UN University, education is presented as part of the solution for global problems. The inclusion of the concept of 'peace dividend'¹⁰² reinforces the support for education. Moreover, the rhetorical aspect includes a positive and negative stage of possibilities. The positive aspect is internalised as part of the actions and goals of the hegemonic actor.

In the next set of images, peace is considered as nodal point and it is possible to follow its articulation in different contexts. Disarmament has been a central aspect for the UN. In this sense, the UN General Assembly holds special sessions on disarmament,

¹⁰² This concept, widely used in the 1990s, urged to reduce the expenditure on defence and armament and to invest in other areas, such as education.

and the Department for Disarmament Affairs¹⁰³ was established in 1982 for its supervision. The poster on the left was part of the international competition that celebrated the second special assembly on disarmament. The other one corresponds to the third special session in 1988. In both assemblies¹⁰⁴, the recommendations and decisions considered the UN's control regarding nuclear and conventional armament and the promotion of disarmament worldwide. Both pieces rely on the same idea: The compositional interpretation shows two opposite elements, which conveys the idea of an evolving scenario that overcomes a specific danger.



(7)



(8)

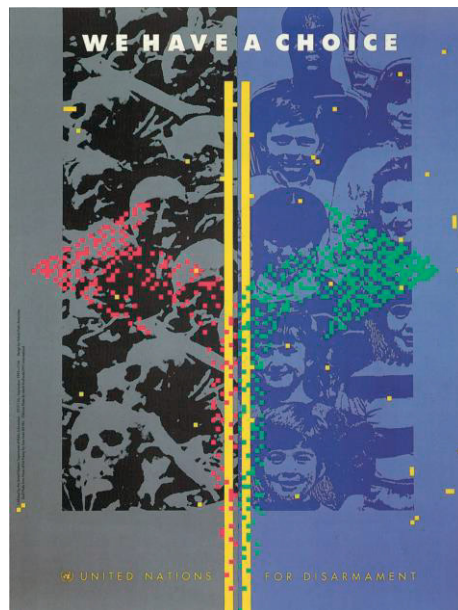
In this case, the hegemonic actor is linked to the solution of a central issue (control of armament). The dove representing the collective will of the community remains as a “threatened but hopeful” figure. The issues of authority and the level of persuasion comprise a ‘victorious dove’. The phrase “Our Hope for a Secure Future”, at the top of the piece on the right, connects the collective identity that the UN represents with abstract references as ‘hope and future’. The transitional aspect that these images entail, in this case, can be compared to what discourse theory considers as the social

¹⁰³ Nowadays, this issue is managed by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). See: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/>

¹⁰⁴ The official texts of the Assembly can be reached in <https://www.un.org/disarmament/topics/ssod/ssod4/documents/> Accessed 20.08.2018.

imaginaries. These convey a complementary dimension in which ‘hope and future’ appear as a horizon of fullness. As argued by discourse theory, imaginaries are a significant part of the discursive structure that a hegemonic stance requires. The reference to ‘future’ will be discussed in the last section of the analysis.

Duality is used again in the following piece entitled, “We have a choice” published by the UN Department of Public Information (1991). In this piece, the visual representation of armament/disarmament shows a more dramatic elaboration. The two photos composing the poster illustrate opposing possibilities. A pile of skulls appears as the consequences of war; the grey and black shades and a red arrow pointing to the left add a dramatic connotation to the image. The right side represents a living world with the photo of many smiling children. It has a bluish background, and a green arrow points to the right direction, as opposed to the red arrow. Two yellow lines divide the contrasting settings. The use of these three colours, along with the arrows that point to contrary directions, bring to mind an allegory of movement.



(9)

These colours bear a resemblance to a traffic signal showing the way a situation may move in positive or a negative sense. It is worth noticing the use of children in such serious issue as disarmament, where they are presented next to skulls. In the discursive level, the use of children brings about the perception of hope that is commonly associated with childhood. The combination of elements, such as children and the green

combination attempts to show a balanced vision between mobilising effective forces as the blue helmets, combined with activities such as education and health. All the elements included in this poster are a remarkable example of the fixation of meaning. The articulation shows a renovated account of social objectivity and identity. The statement “peacekeeping is a global partnership” straightforwardly conveys the rationale behind the image. The substantial presence of various regional and international organisations reinforces the view about the kind of structural framework that must exist to address the task and problems that affect the world. This standpoint echoes the institutionalist views that underpin the liberal approach to governance. The organisations included are the ‘operative group’ of the common identity. Then, the possibilities to achieve and fulfil the duties of peacekeeping are aligned according to the ‘global partnership’ that these institutions consider convenient.

Therefore, in this piece, the meaning of what peace entails is directly linked to the rest of the elements depicted. In other words, considering the views on economic policies of the organisations included, the ‘identity of peace’ has a ‘liberal’ (or even ‘neoliberal’) identity in this articulation. One criticism of this view is that, since the 1990s, the peace interventions implied an ideological mandate that represented a single international territory as a “universal social contract” (Debrix, 1999: 9). This image develops a hegemonic and universal stance by including a comprehensive variety of actors that represent a political organisation’s idea. The spatial organisation shows the world ‘surrounded’ by the sea of institutions and actions that aim to contribute to peacekeeping. Together, the discursive elements help to consolidate the discourse of social objectivity that the UN envisages.

In the next examples, the focus is on other issues that concern the UN framework beyond peace and security. As expected from a hegemonic articulation, dispersed elements are attached together in order to cover and mobilise different points of meaning and identification. The following two images exemplify this effort. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are two of the main international actors that deal one of the most dramatic and persistent problems that affects humans worldwide: hunger. Despite criticism and controversies, FAO is still recognised as the lead actor working on this problem. The image on the left celebrates World Food Day (16th October) in 2010. The visual focal point includes dozens of human figures with raised hands that form a map of the world. The position in which the figures are portrayed insinuates they are at a public demonstration.

The size of the text at the top emphasises the message, and the yellow background with a shining light in the centre, which resembles the sun, give the poster a hopeful or

“bright” scene that complements the gesticulation of the human figures. At the left bottom corner, is a statement: “Sign the petition to end hunger”. This corner of the poster also promotes the website for the “1 Billion Hungry” campaign. The poster on the right published by the WFP (2009) shows a dramatic drawing of a human figure as skeleton representing famine. The globe is placed in or as the stomach of the human figure resembling the symptom of kwashiorkor.¹⁰⁵

UNITED AGAINST HUNGER



16 October 2010 **World Food Day**

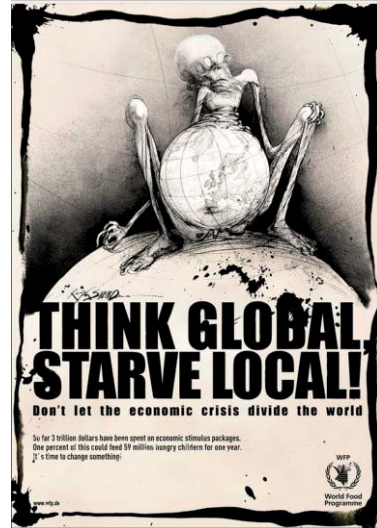


SIGN THE PETITION TO END HUNGER
WWW.1BILLIONHUNGRY.ORG



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations
www.fao.org

(11)



(12)

The human figure, skeleton thin, is sitting in a sphere resembling the globe. This powerful figure, as the focal point of the image, is complemented by the main message of the poster that ironically, refers to the motto “Think global act local”, which environmental and social movements use. The message of the poster points to the 2007-2008 food price and economic crisis that aggravated the hunger problem. At the bottom of the piece, the statement claims that some financial resources could be invested to diminish the number of hungry children in the world. It suggests the decision-making issues and the incapacity of some economic policies or practices to improve the situation in this regard. The predominance of black and grey shades reaffirms a gloominess that corresponds with what the message denounces. The specific social demands (hunger directly and poverty indirectly) considered in these two images convey certain limitations of the actors involved in the UN’s account of social objectivity. This issue can be regarded as a ‘geopolitical’ concern in that the cases facing starvation (Africa see

¹⁰⁵ This symptom is common in advanced state of malnourishment with a bloated abdominal area.

Campbell, 2007 on Darfur, or current cases such as Yemen) are related to internal conflict but also to external interventions.

Regarding identity and discursive articulation, these images continue with some of the notions of community and forms of identification that were previously discussed. In terms of the rhetorical organisation, the binary united/divided is strongly present, even though the images are not related. Unity is placed as a condition to overcome a specific situation with positive results, thus proposing a bright scenario if cooperation prevails. In the poster “United Against Hunger”, the world is literally embodied by a sum of individuals representative of “We the peoples of the United Nations”. On the contrary, the other piece criticises the uneven conditions of social and economic development that are the consequence of the implementation of particular policies. The criticisms are pointed to the commitment and expectations of a community that has been labelled in many discourses as a ‘global community’. The criticism can also be extended to the state level and to the framework of international organisations that fund assistance programmes.

The message exposes the issue that even if the production of food and its distribution have considerably increased under a free-market global economy, millions of people still do not have access to proper conditions for basic nourishment. Nonetheless, the inclusion of “global” in the WFP’s image exemplifies the use of new signifiers that expand the original discursive articulation of the UN. For the discursive analysis, the relevance of the images is to show that any area of the social field requires certain institutional engagement. With these pieces presented, the element of hegemony covers a world community that intervenes in peace and security, supports disarmament and links education and sustainable development and asks worldwide union to diminish hunger. In the next set of images, the analysis moves to issues related to the population and environment having, once again, the world in the scenario of balance or collapse.

The next painting celebrated the World Population day in 1992¹⁰⁶ (published by The United Nations Population Fund). The compositional interpretation shows that many elements are distributed in ‘balance’. The spatial organisation of the elements plays an interesting role because of the symbolism invested in all of them. Starting from the centre, within the earth, the silhouettes of different elements of the natural world surround a green tree at the very centre of the planet. The tree resembles a cedar; this

¹⁰⁶ This is on 11th of July and the name is at the bottom (from left) in Spanish, French and English.

type of tree was revered by the Sumerian civilization, and it was called “the World Tree”.¹⁰⁷



(13)

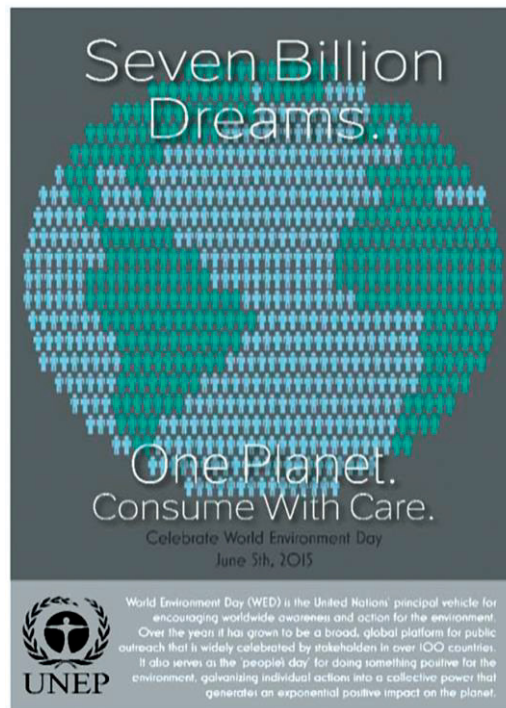
There is no interaction among the elements depicted, but the symbolism points to a balance among species hinted by the location of the elements. The hands may refer to the five inhabited continents representing the desired unity. Once more, the space view of the earth shows the blue sphere evoking some cosmogonic vision for the whole piece. The collective identity is indirectly hinted by the colourful hands and the possible actions to reach this vision of the relation between environment and population.

In contrast to this vision, the ecologic balance seems threatened in the piece dedicated to the environment day (2015). This image shows the connection between populations with environmental concerns. This poster published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) turns into a more complicated situation when small human figures represent the characteristic space view of the world including oceans and land. The text at the bottom explains the aim of celebrating the environment day and

¹⁰⁷ For the explanation, see:

http://www.ehow.com/facts_5587602_spiritual'meaning'cedar'tree.html Accessed: 16.08.2018.

that is considered a day of worldwide action “galvanizing individual actions into a collective power that generates an exponential positive impact on the planet”.

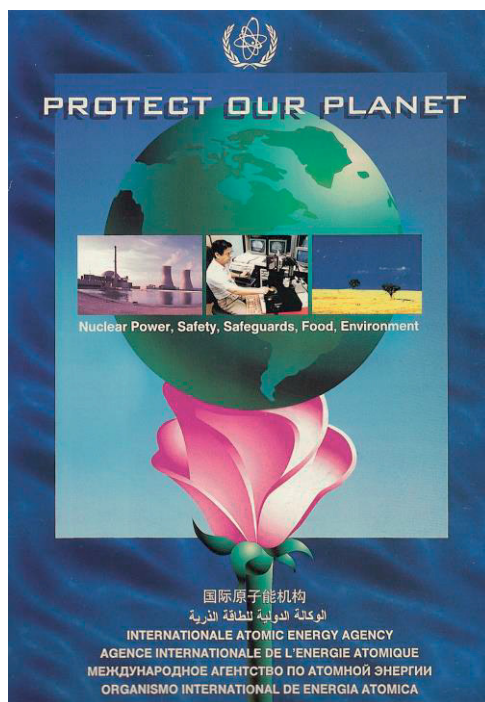


(14)

Visually, the image makes the impression of an overpopulated world that has to deal with ‘seven billion dreams’ on it. The saturation of human figures, occupying all possible space, challenges the previous claim of unity and unproblematic coexistence. The call to ‘consume with care’ points to the challenges and risk of the relation between the world population growth, environmental issues, and the availability and consumption of natural resources. The way the collective identity is addressed calling for ‘individual actions’ differs at some extent with other posters demanding actions or specific stance regarding a problem. Intertextuality shows how that the same composition, human figures making the world, is used in different contexts. In the piece, “united against hunger” the figures are articulated in a positive context while in the previous image they represent a contrasting scenario. In both cases, the message can be interpreted that the outcomes affecting or improving the world depend on human action.

Continuing with the environmental topics, the next image includes an expansion of the discursive chain with a new theme. The poster “Protect Our Planet”, published by

the International Atomic Energy Agency (1997), links nuclear power with ecological balance. The spatial organisation of all the elements plays an important role in conveying the message. The multi-focal point shows the earth in the middle, located over the drawing of a rose as a pillar holding the earth. Below the logo of the IAEA, the message reads, “Protect Our Planet”. Three photos lay over the earth; they portray different aspects that reinforce the rhetorical reference of the composition. A functioning nuclear facility, a man working in a place equipped with screens and special equipment and a natural landscape are presented as part of this issue. Under the photos is the wording, “Nuclear Power, Safety, Safeguards, Food, and Environment”. The images and text give the impression of complete functionality and environmental balance. At the bottom of the poster, ‘International Atomic Energy Agency’ is written in the six official¹⁰⁸ languages of the UN.



(15)

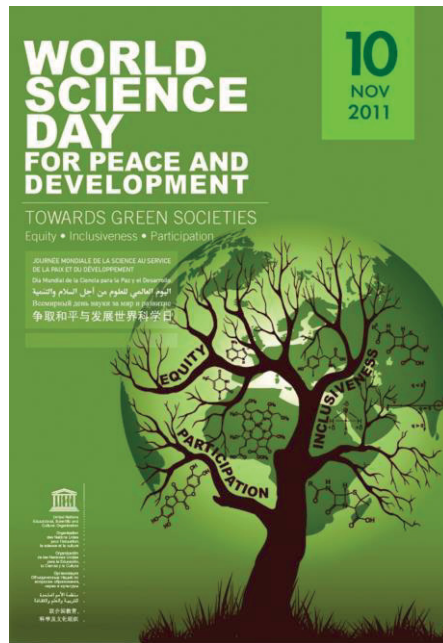
Taken at face value, this relatively ‘basic and easy’ poster offers a complex mobilisation of signifiers combined with indications of identity that, all together, construct a

¹⁰⁸ This is the only image that I collected which includes all the UN official languages. From top to bottom: Mandarin, Arab, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

hegemonic articulation. The expression “Our Planet” and the inclusion of the official languages reinforce the mobilisation of common identity. Discursively, even if there are no sentences that elaborate a clearer message, the inclusion of nuclear power, together with food and environment, affect their meaning and, thus, their identity. The poster promotes the use of nuclear energy as beneficial under special safety measures. The photo of the man working frames a technological advance to control and produce this type of energy in a constructive way. The colour of the earth, the rose and the photo of the natural landscape present the nuclear issue in conciliation with environmental sustainability.

From the hegemonic perspective, the vision of the world of the UN expands its discursive articulation with the reaffirmation of the worldwide community that is close to scientific and technological development. This point is thus expanded when the ‘nuclear discourse’ takes the production of food and the protection of the environment as part of its benefits. In terms of authority and the level of persuasion, this piece appeals to the seriousness of the issue and the responsibility that atomic energy entails. The photos include a sense of expertise and stability that legitimates the message and overall discourse. The rhetorical organisation points to the exclusion of other alternatives operating within the environmental discourse. In this sense, I am arguing that the discourse of the nuclear benefits can be easily rejected considering the ‘protect our planet’ claim is ambiguous and contradictory. The protection of the environment involving nuclear energy is clearly a contested issue, as environmental groups’ rejection of the use of this energy exemplifies.

The next piece closes with the environmental theme and illustrates a new link in the vision of the UN. This image celebrates the World Science Day for Peace and Development (10th November) supported by the UNESCO. In this occasion (2011), the subject addressed was “Towards Green Societies. Equity, Inclusiveness, Participation”. The illustration shows a fusion of elements with the green colour reinforcing the particular topic. Within the body of the three, the land of the globe represents the leaves; different formulas and the representation of chemical structures are presented as part of the branches, along with the words ‘equity, inclusiveness, and participation’. The composition and combination of the elements provides a framework to highlight the whole idea of the illustration. This is reflected in the discursive articulation with the signifiers used. In this way, the societies that conform the world are framed into the environmental concern. This activates the ‘green’ identity’ linking the principles mentioned with a peaceful and scientific development. The rhetorical composition brings to the fore a vision of modernity based on the references to science and the visions of social organisation that this reference mobilises.



(16)

This image combines two ideas of universality. The piece works with the idea that equity, inclusiveness, and participation are worldwide values providing a legitimate position to achieve the vision demanded. The other idea is the reach and acceptability that scientific knowledge provides to accounts of social and political organisation. Any claim against this knowledge would be deemed as ‘irrational’ and illegitimate.

The final piece for analysis in this section is of the most significant efforts made by the UN in the recent years. By the early 21st century, the historical context was propitious to launch an ambitious set of goals that aimed to improve the conditions of the world. Based on the idea of reaching the 2000 years milestone, the United Nations Millennium Declaration¹⁰⁹ (2000–2015) was a major strategy for this actor. The success attributed to this Declaration, at least what is claimed in poverty reduction,¹¹⁰ motivated

¹⁰⁹ It was approved in the Fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly in September 2000. The goals are 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger 2. Achieve universal primary education 3. Promote gender equality and empower women 4. Reduce child mortality 5. Improve maternal health 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases 7. Ensure environmental sustainability 8. Develop a global partnership for development See: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/news.shtml> Accessed: 27.10.2018.

¹¹⁰ When the results of the Millennium Agenda were evaluated 15 years later, it was claimed that poverty levels decreased for the first time worldwide. *Millennium Development Goals Report 2015* (UN). Accessed 19.11.2018. See: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20PR%20FAQs.pdf

the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Millennium Declaration is worth analysing¹¹¹ because it is an evaluation of the situation of the world and the role of the UN. The beginning of the 21st century worked as a background and (re)starting point for this actor. In perspective with our analytical concern, this kind of context provides the possibility of elaborating new discourses of social objectivity and strategies to fulfil all the goals. The parts from the Declaration's text¹¹² include some general content and point out some particular features that are relevant for my general analysis.

The opening words in the first section, "Values and principles", read as follows,

We, heads of State and Government have gathered..., at the dawn of a new millennium, to reaffirm our faith in the Organisation and its Charter as indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world".

The following paragraph states,

we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level"; and the third point declares: "We reaffirm our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which have proved timeless and universal. Indeed, their relevance and capacity to inspire have increased, as nations and peoples have become increasingly interconnected and interdependent

In terms of discourse, the hegemonic status and legitimacy of the endeavour are claimed with the reference to the Charter. In the fifth point, an interesting statement is that globalisation has many 'positive' aspects, but, at the same time, it acknowledges that the benefits are not distributed equitably. The sixth point needs a detailed explanation due to the variety of issues involved and because it develops the legitimacy of the actions. It considers that six values are shared worldwide and are essential "to the international relations in the twenty-first century". These are freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. The interesting part in the explanation of these values is that they are considered from a multilevel perspective: from the international level to the personal level. For instance, freedom is associated with a subject that has been granted social and political rights within a democratic and

¹¹¹ I include partial and full quotations from the document.

¹¹² The text has eight sections and 32 points. I' Values and principles, II' Peace, security and disarmament, III 'Development and poverty eradication, IV' Protecting our common environment, V' Human rights, democracy and good governance, VI' Protecting the vulnerable, VII' Meeting the special needs of Africa, VIII' Strengthening the United Nations

participative framework of governance. These rights are best assured through this framework.¹¹³ Equality is explained in the following way,

No individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured

Tolerance also involves both levels; it stresses that the diversity of belief, culture and language must be respected and appreciated as an asset of humanity. This value brings about the possibility to promote a culture of peace and dialogue among all ‘civilisations’ (it does not specify which). The respect of nature is linked to the actual patterns of production and consumption even if such patterns are considered as unsustainable. The last value is shared responsibility; the opening quotation of this chapter is a description of this value. It stresses the importance of multilateral cooperation and recognises the UN as “the most universal and most representative organisation in the world”.

This first section has remarkable statements that demand further analysis. Firstly, the six values are considered as a worldwide commitment that is an essential current feature among the member states. This position implies that the universal dimension of the project is reclaimed along with the reaffirmation of the role and significance of the UN. The statement of the “most universal and representative organisation” illustrates the spirit of vindication displayed throughout the document. I consider that these values become the ‘actualised’ foundations of the project. As noticed in the first image of the present chapter, the multilevel perspective simultaneously linking social and political actors is a feature in the discourse of this actor. This is a crucial move in strengthening a hegemonic position. To exemplify what I regard as a hegemonic move, I consider that the topic of poverty shows the ways that strategies and actions at the international level ‘descend’ to the ground level. The management of the problems and their resolution is one of the aspects on which part of the legitimacy of the project depends. I show this through the following quotes, taken from different sections. The third section, “Development and poverty eradication”, begins with this statement,

We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want

The next point offers this explanation,

¹¹³ I consider that this refers to liberal democracy. The interesting issue is that this ‘ideological’ reference is not detailed.

Success in meeting these objectives depends, *inter alia*, on good governance within each country. It also depends on good governance at the international level and on transparency in the financial, monetary and trading systems

Lastly, the final section concerns the actual role of the UN and actions to improve. The 30th point explains the actions or plans for all of the main bodies and agencies. The last three paragraphs are worth quoting at length,

To ensure greater policy coherence and better cooperation between the United Nations, its agencies, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organisation, as well as other multilateral bodies, with a view to achieving a fully coordinated approach to the problems of peace and development

To strengthen further cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through their world organisation, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in various fields, including peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights and democracy and gender issues

To give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organisations and civil society, in general, to contribute to the realization of the Organisation's goals and programmes

Linking these paragraphs together, there is a deprived and affected subject that a functional framework will assist based on certain practices (good governance, transparency, etc.). The framework and the practices are based on the ideological character of not only the economic side but also the political side of what the UN represents. As presented, the ideological base is acknowledged in the paragraph mentioning the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organisation. Furthermore, the solution of the “problems of peace and development” is firmly attached to this ideological frame. In this way, the space of influence of the hegemonic actor also includes institutions (e.g. national parliaments) and subjects (e.g. human rights ‘gender issues’). The Declaration ends with a consideration of the UN as the following,

the indispensable common house of the entire human family, through which we will seek to realize our universal aspirations for peace, cooperation and development...

In this final statement, ‘human family’ and ‘our universal aspirations’ empower the common identity promoted. Resuming the findings of this section, I illustrated the expansion and articulation of a wide and multidimensional discourse that offers a wide array of reference points. Through the images, the content included issues concerning disarmament, peacekeeping, hunger, overpopulation, nuclear energy, science and education. The remarkable point is that the discursive intervention that underpins the project literally sutures together all of these issues. With the Millennium Declaration, it

is possible to see the link of the levels that help the discourse cover many social and political spaces. In terms of discourse and identity formation, both issues appear closely interrelated. In the visual representation of the world and related issues, the social space is acknowledged in a dual scenario where its viability or rupture depends on the actions of the actors involved.

Taking a deconstructive reading of the moves regarded as hegemonic, in some of the images of this title, the vision of the world that the UN represents portrays a functional framework of international cooperation and organisations that establish a sense of governability at the international level. The aim of improving the conditions of the world as a shared interest is presented and combined with institutions and practices such as sovereignty, diplomacy and international law. Legitimacy is grounded by the contrast of having a social field (international level) anarchic attributable to the impossibility of the elements (states) to achieve better forms of cooperation. However, the work of the UN and related international organisations eclipses this problematic situation. Thus, the existence of this actor is justified, and it performs as a point of identification in itself.

Conversely, an apocalyptic scenario appears as a consequence of the lack of cooperation or mismanagement. The duality of the situation works in favour of the hegemonic actor's discourse. In issues, such as disarmament, hunger and the environment, wherein the space, the collective identity and the individual are threatened, the role of the hegemonic actor is highly relevant and thus reinforced. Therefore, the collective response to any of the issues presented demands actions from all the actors available and attached to the project. The whole discursive logic develops between the inside, where all of the desired situations occur, vis-à-vis the outside, where war or hunger threatens the field. It is in this logic where the significance and legitimacy of the UN is also displayed. In consequence, the hegemonic discourse widens its scope, areas of identification and inclusiveness. For instance, the term 'global' appears in different images and in the Millennium Declaration. This is a signifier that also shows how the discourse is adapted to different situations in the social field. The duality of inside and outside is also relevant in terms of identity formation; the pieces for analysis show diverse elements working at the same time. The elements activate different methods of identification, some of which have been already mentioned. The socio-political space at stake, the world, is acknowledged as a collective space, and the institutions, practices and actors find a common place and motive to be together.

For instance, in the Millennium Declaration, it is possible to trace a line that links subjects, states and the international system to a shared identity and vision of the world. The values enacted (freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and

shared responsibility) have a grounding effect on the expected behaviour of the actors involved. In this sense, the states and subjects 'align' their respective vision of what the guidelines of the project are. Values are constantly referred to as 'common'; thus, they achieve a universal status that defines the subjectivity that endorses them. The collective identity that is promoted at the international level with the inter-governmental structure moves to the 'human level' at the same time. National belonging, however, is not used when this shared identification is appealed due to the antagonistic relations that exist among some states. The subject is framed as an active and engaged agent that is part of the problem and solution, or as the affected part that needs assistance. The subject obtains benefits in relation to the political organisation that is expected at the national level. In this sense, a form of governance, (democracy), practices and institutions (rule of law,) bestow social and political rights to the subject.

Nevertheless, it is possible to see some limitations and paradoxes in the pieces used for analysis. It is also the point of discourse theory to consider the limits of a hegemonic intervention. In the discourse, even though the element of hegemony has the capacity to include as many signifiers as possible and fix meaning to them, there are limits and inconsistencies. For instance, I noticed two issues in this title. The 'nuclear' question is, for example, a source of tension. I mentioned the possibilities that such a contested question can present. The other issue is the recognition of the Bretton Woods Institutions in the Millennium Declaration. Different social movements worldwide and some states have questioned and challenged the influence of these institutions. I will return to these remarks after the conclusions of the sections are addressed at the end of the chapter. In the next part, the content includes more specific cases where the hegemonic articulation can be appreciated from a different perspective.

6.4 We (some of) the peoples of the world

In this section, the focus is on the way some groups of the collective identity are represented in the context and vision of hegemony. I refer to 'some of the peoples' because I include specific groups or identities that appear as a central element of the common identity. At this point, some patterns of representation of individual and collective identity have been noted in the previous titles; nonetheless, these have been secondary to the main message of the image or document analysed. Here, the aim is to review how individual and collective subjectivities are constructed and related to the discursive formation at issue. In my case of analysis, the examples show the ways 'the population of the world' is presented through the work of the UN. As previously noted,

the discourse calls for some universal considerations when referring to the subject. Values, rights and principles, for instance, are demanded for any person regardless her or his social condition. This situation is comprised in the Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which reads,

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

The Declaration is by far the most elaborated expression of universalism characterising the UN as a hegemonic project. In terms of the normative aspect, human rights represent the principal social and political achievement of the account of social objectivity that the UN promotes. However, as discourse theory explains, this universal acceptance lacks full representation because there are exclusions and limits inherent to any structure.¹¹⁴

The UN's vision also includes the visual representation of specific social groups. The following image (UNICEF circa 1980) presents some common ideas about what children represent not only in particular contexts but in every society.



(17)

¹¹⁴ In this case, I refer to issues that are observed and applied in opposing ways and they are source of tension and rupture: death penalty, women's reproductive rights, or LGBT rights.

In this case, the elements depicted emphasise the idea of a collective coexistence based on a societal feature (multiculturalism). The distinctive clothing of the children appeals to a particular cultural identity that others appreciate. Yet, the piece promotes the view that unity shall prevail in spite of the differences among nations. The text at the bottom, “Toward a Better World”, reinforces the indication of unity. The image of national flags surrounding the world also comes across as a signal of unity. The compositional setting points to the metaphor of moving together and sharing the space. The image suggests different points of identification representing the international, national and personal levels at the same time. The representation of children reduces the possible tensions that the use of national flags can trigger. As I previously mentioned, national flags are infrequently featured on the UN images reviewed. Avoiding historical tensions between nation states is part of the hegemonic actor or project duty. In this piece, the institutional work of the UN is associated with the care of childhood and, by extension, with the future.

The following two images depict different aspects about women’s social conditions.¹¹⁵ The next piece, “Women Feed the World” (FAO World Food Day 1998), depicts the world in a blue blanket surrounded by the title of the poster, which is written in five of the official UN languages.¹¹⁶ From different points, four ears of wheat seem to hold the blanket. Resembling the Greek mythological figure of Atlas, the photos of women from diverse ethnical background are placed under the world, as if they are carrying it on their shoulders. In the collage, the women do not interact with each other but are performing daily activities of food production or commerce.

The press release of the events supporting the World Food Day reads as follows,¹¹⁷

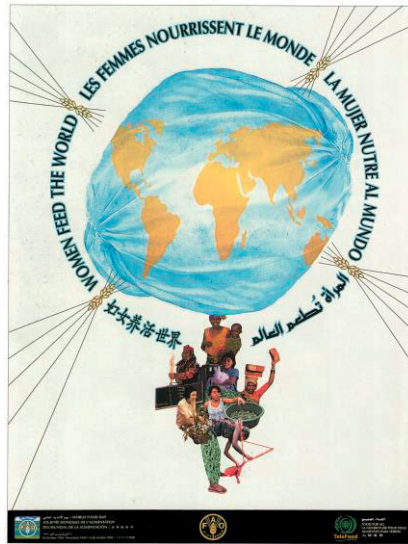
World Food Day was observed in some 150 countries today, on the theme "Women Feed the World," stressing women's key role in food production and appealing for equality between women and men

The representation of these women connects their local context to the world level and emphasises their importance and influence on its immediate social surroundings and beyond. They are portrayed as active and non-dependant individuals, but, at the same time, they are also presented as providers.

¹¹⁵ Image 22 in this chapter, and image 9 in chapter 8, also address this issue. Gender inequality is not directly discussed in the analysis, but I tried to make visible this topic with these images.

¹¹⁶ The text in Russian is missing.

¹¹⁷ For the original press release see: FAO Press Release 98/60 (FAO 1998).

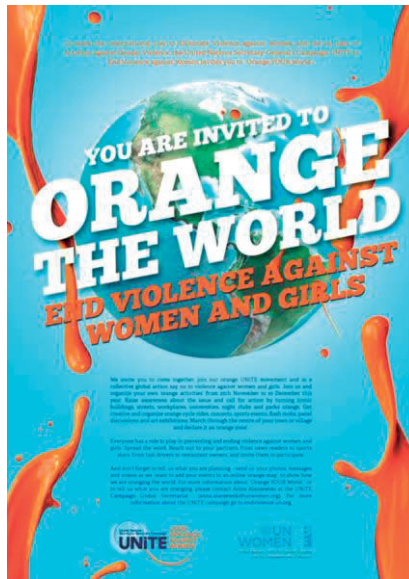


(18)

The piece depicts a social role outside the household context but still includes the message of ‘feeding’, which mobilises the aspect of motherhood. The conditions of the women are presented in a positive perspective that portrays them as prominent social agents. While the focal point of the image is the globe, the collage of photos is highly relevant, visually and discursively, because this gives relevance to the social group represented.

In the same line, the following poster belongs to the 2015 campaign¹¹⁸ ‘Orange the World’, related to the International day (25th November) to Eliminate Violence against Women. It also includes the call for action known as 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence (from 25th of November to 10th of December). This day is part of the campaign UNITE to End Violence against Women promoted by the UN Secretary-General and UN Women. This campaign is organised since 2014. The visual elements in the piece strengthen the slogan placed at the centre. The text explains the aim (to raise awareness of the problem) and the actions considered (to turn representative local places orange, organise public activities and spread the information about the issue and the associated activities). In terms of articulation, this a good example of the (late) inclusion of such kind of demands.

¹¹⁸ The only reference in the websites as why this colour is used in the campaign says: “As a bright and optimistic colour, orange represents a future free from violence against women and girls” See: <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/orangeday.shtml> Accessed: 20.09.2018.



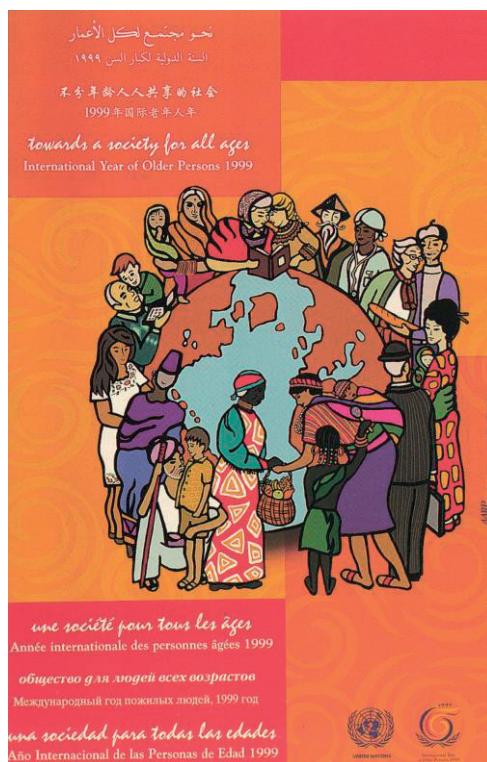
(19)

The example illustrates how an endemic problem like gender violence is discursively addressed. Due to the format of the poster, a comprehensive explanation cannot be included. In my opinion, however, one remarkable omission is that the structural dynamics or practices that persist in this problem are not questioned. In the UN WOMEN's website,¹¹⁹ where the campaign is further described, the information available explains the consequences of violence against women and girls, and the solutions that this agency is proposing. In reference to identity and discursive articulation, this piece differs from other UN posters in the way that it addresses the common identity. Specifically, it lacks the inclusive register of the collective 'we'. The direct call for the reader is "you are invited". As the first line of the text reads, "We invite you to come together, join our orange UNITE movement and in a collective global action say no to violence [...]". This collective action does not entail a notion of communitarian coexistence as in other pieces but rather an individualistic approach that converges at some point. This expression differentiates a duplet that share a particular goal but lack a 'common future'. The inclusion of the world gives a double meaning to the poster. A positive aspect is that the whole world is involved in attending to the

¹¹⁹ The rest of the content does not question the source or continuation of the problem. It does explain that the goal is to create awareness. In regard to the success of this campaign, it is mentioned that the lack of funding has affected the campaign. See: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what%20we%20do/ending%20violence%20against%20women>. Accessed: 27.11.2018.

problem of gender violence; in contrast, it also conveys that this type of violence takes place in every society.

The image below illustrates one more step to consolidate the hegemonic articulation. Celebrating the International Year of Older Persons in 1999, the poster ‘Towards a Society for all Ages’ depicts a multi-ethnic group standing together around the earth.



(20)

The drawing resembles the cultural diversity of the world’s population, and the text included in the official UN languages stresses this idea. The characteristic clothing of the persons celebrates difference through an unproblematic coexistence, thus recognising a multicultural diversity. It is the only image analysed wherein the human elements depicted ‘interact’ with each other. This interaction is presented as a natural showing closeness regardless of the different origins. As previously seen, the human chain surrounding the world with a borderless land conveys the statement that this vision articulates a discourse where the foundations of a social formation are grounded. The spatial organisation of all the elements develops the idea of closeness and familiarity. The logic of difference is clearly seen with the diverse elements constituting

a unique identity. Every person standing next to one to another epitomises a chain of differences that intends to make a whole. The message also points to an idealistic coexistence that can be analysed as an imaginary. The setting of achieving full integration and the complete obliteration of conflict is always the horizon of possibility that any socio-political project aims. This illustration exemplifies a “we the peoples of the world” perspective, excluding the problematic conception of ‘nations’. To me, this image is the perfect example of a scene portraying the final foundation stage. In discourse theory terms, unity as a foundational myth is finally achieved, and it is then possible to consider it as an imaginary.

In regard to the analysis of social difference, this image shows how a discursive element, such as aging people, is also included as part of a hegemonic articulation. This image complements the other pieces in this section and shows how different social groupings or problems existing in every society are considered in this articulation. This inclusive approach enables the hegemonic stance to appear as available and concerned with every single element conforming to the social space. The analysis reveals that the investment of meaning through this inclusiveness is strategic for a hegemonic formation. In this case, identity formation can be seen from many angles: the subject depicted in the images, the subject as a receiver of the message, and the relation that is expected to take place in terms of identification.

The ways these various subjectivities are presented in specific groups also echoes the dual setting of positive and negative possibilities. The posters are concerned with populations in vulnerable or disadvantaged positions. Discursively, each group has different capabilities to exert their agency. For instance, children are indicative of a possibility to improve the future. Moreover, women are portrayed as nurturers at the local level but as having a massive influence at the world level. The elderly population is presented as a case of non-discrimination. Nevertheless, simultaneously, all of these groups suffer a variety of problems and forms of mistreatment. The message in this kind of image attempts to develop a form of identification as part of the same collective identity, or, in the cases where specific problems affect a person, the aim is to evoke an empathetic reaction to the case presented. In reference to hegemony, these cases are examples of how individual and collective identity is built through the system of differences and the importance that the construction of subjectivity implies for the hegemonic project. The last images show the normative commitment behind the project and the positive aspects (e.g. women’s social conditions) that are worthy to support.

In the three sections presented until here, the analysis has indicated the way the account of social objectivity reaches different levels of social and political actorness. The pieces for analysis included a wide range of issues, accounts of subjectivity and a

binary of positive and negative settings. Each of these situations has a temporal and situational dimension: the future. The next and final section includes this temporal reference as a background.

6.5 One future world

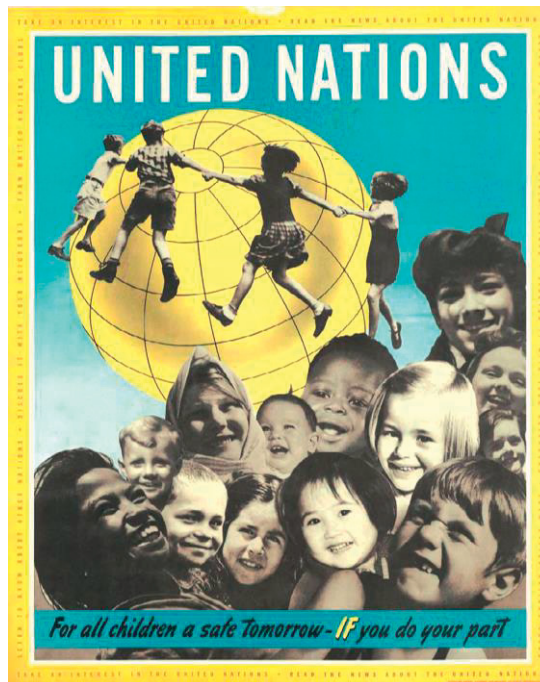
To close this conceptual setting, the hegemonic vision is analysed by the articulation of 'future', not only as signifier but also as an imaginary. Discourse theory considers that a hegemonic project requires myth and imaginaries in order to delimit a horizon of possibility. The idea to consider a title with a reference like this developed because the notion of future constantly appears in the vision of the UN. I suggest looking at this temporal reference with the concept of imaginary to find the ways the whole account of objectivity is projected to a level of (almost) full achievement. For instance, to illustrate this issue, the second point of the Millennium Declaration asserts the following,

As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs

This quote shows some of the logics and implications that imaginaries have in a project ascribing accounts of social objectivity. In consequence, I argue that with 'future' as a reference of possibility, the element of hegemony brings in one important dimension that is the possibility of fulfilment. The following pieces for analysis will demonstrate how this reference has been used at different stages.¹²⁰ The next two images include some elements that were commented on in the preceding section and they illustrate how particular subjectivities are associated to certain temporal settings.

The piece "For all children a safe tomorrow 'If you do your part'" was published by the United Nations Department of Public Information in 1947. The piece has some visual and symbolic elements, as previously noted. The image has a powerful focal point sending a message for identification.

¹²⁰ The presentation of the pieces, however, does not follow any special arrangement.



(21)

The collage of smiling children represents a multicultural and ethnical human foundation. The children playing and surrounding the globe (without continents) complement the festive feeling of the poster. Considering the year when this piece was published, the children and the globe as the main elements hint at the union required after a period of war. The chromatic combination and contrasts with the tones of the faces highlight and link parts of the intended message. In the outer frame, it reads, “Take an interest in the United Nations ‘Read the news about the United Nations – Learn to know about other nations – Discuss it with your neighbours – Form United Nations groups’”. The yellow colour of this frame matches the colour of the word “IF” and the globe. This association relates the conditional aspect of the word to the action demanded in the poster as well as to the social field—namely, the world. In this piece, the rhetorical composition shows the unity that the shared identity needs, and this is connected to the level of authority and legitimacy displayed that all of the elements display. A condition of possibility (“safe tomorrow”) depends on the various social groups that belong to the hegemonic stance.

Continuing with the issues of subjectivity and future, UNICEF’s poster “Today’s Girls – Tomorrow’s Women” (circa 1995) portrays a representation of the upcoming generation of women through an assortment of pictures of girls of different ages and

ethnic backgrounds. The composition makes the focal point on the girls' faces, especially on the ones making direct eye contact. The facial expressions show opposing moods. A couple of smiling faces are contrasted with the serious ones. Through this contrast, the piece concurrently portrays hope and need c. It can be inferred that these girls have precarious social conditions, as the main message demands to 'invest' in them.



(22)

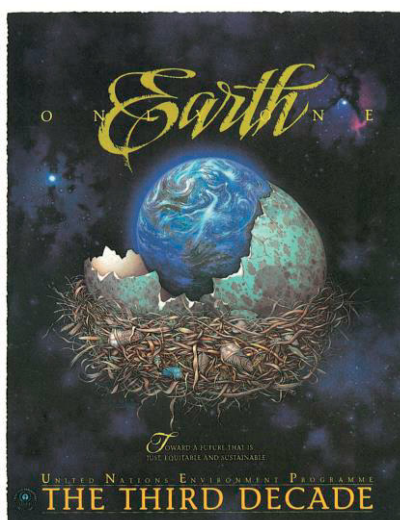
Once more, the multi-ethnic diversity portrayed reaffirms the sense of inclusion and the idea that youth is a common goal of UN and UNICEF in terms of what they seek to represent. The text in the poster shows four of the UN official languages.¹²¹ It calls for investment in the new generations, affirming the need for commitment and action. The images and message do not try to show a victimised subject; instead, they denounce disadvantages related to specific social conditions. The pictures of the girls are not related, but the point of identification includes ethnic diversity, gender inequalities and a certain age group as the main factors to connect with the receiver.

Considering the discursive dynamics and rhetorical organisation, the message in both images demands viewers to act responsibly in 'a present time', which will have an influence on a future period. The images play with the temporal metaphor that the children represent, and this is linked to the historical consolidation of the UN project. As such, there is no connection between each of the children depicted, except for the needs and social conditions that they may face. This is how the logic of difference can

¹²¹ Russian and Arabic are missing in this piece.

be seen in the contextual scenario proposed. This image shows some basic features that appeal to a wide array of social elements associated with the socio-political project at stake. The variety of ethnicity and representativeness of each of the subjects depicted construct a solid chain of identification and legitimacy. In addition, these examples include the temporal condition aims to relate the situation of specific subjects to a wider vision of social objectivity.

The next image shifts our attention to the depiction of environmental issues and its discursive projection through a temporal reference. In other images presented in the second section, I underlined that opposing possibilities are reliant on the accomplishment of the hegemonic actor. The imaginaries appear in this sort of context. This image shows one of the possibilities at stake. In its twentieth anniversary (1972-1992), the UN Environment Programme published the piece “Only One Earth”.



(23)

Seen from outer space, the focal point is the earth emerging from an egg that rests in a nest constructed out of leaves and branches. Below the nest, the text reads, “Towards a future that is just, equitable, and sustainable”. At the bottom, the text “The Third Decade” follows the name of the agency in reference to the timeframe associated with this programme. The colour of the text contrasts with the background. However, the phrase “only one” is difficult to read. This expression highlights the uniqueness of the planet and the transcendence of environmental concerns; by extension, it hints at the unity of the endeavour. The piece presents the basic idea of environmental conservation, but, simultaneously, it appeals to a cosmogonic vision that combines the

space view and the symbolism of fertility or life associated with the image of the egg. From the discursive perspective, the future world is linked to values such as justness, equitability and sustainability. I have noted in other pieces that these values work as signifiers that bring the project's normative core, and they simultaneously represent the societal grounds that are considered as universally accepted. However, as seen in other images with the same topic, the common representation of the 'environmental future of the world' is commonly presented in terms of survival or collapse. Paradoxically, no other species has polluted and affected the environment more than the one who is calling to protect it.

In the images of this section, the imaginary of 'future' is closely related with the levels of authority and persuasion that the images discursively articulate. A deeper identification with the project depends directly on these levels. As I stated before, hegemonic discourse thrives in a setting of positive and negative possibilities. A positive development benefits the level of authority and persuasion and, with this, the social engagement and identification with the project. In these images, the idea of a shared responsibility implies a positive upcoming time for the collective effort that a hegemonic project represents. Nevertheless, environmental concerns¹²² represent a source of tension and division among the members of UN. This is an example of what post-foundational thinking regard as the impossibility to achieve full presence and stable grounds.

The final piece of analysis in this chapter is an ongoing plan that aims to improve the conditions of the world in the immediate future. This piece is the document "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2030 Agenda). I selected this document to close the analysis for different reasons. The main issue is that, as the Millennium Declaration, it implies a crucial situation for the UN. For my analysis, it has important and concrete claims of social objectivity that show the current condition of this actor. In practical terms, this declaration celebrates the 70th anniversary of the UN (1945-2015) and attempts to continue with the momentum of the Millennium Declaration with its focus on the issues that this declaration was unable to improve. The UN and member states consider that the 17 goals¹²³ included in the

¹²² I refer to the disputes on the application of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

¹²³ I mention the main issue of each goal. From first to last: end poverty, end hunger, ensure healthy lives, equitable quality education, gender equality and empower all women and girls, sustainable management of water, access to energy, inclusive economic growth, infrastructure and sustainable industrialisation, reduce inequality among countries, safer cities and human settlements, sustainable consumption, combat climate change, sustainability of the oceans, protect ecosystems, promote peaceful inclusive societies and Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for

2030 Agenda can change many endemic problems worldwide and are thus quite ambitious aims.

The text consists of the Preamble, Declaration (with eight sections), explanation of the Sustainable Goals and Targets, Means of implementation and the Global Partnership, and the Follow-up and Review section. The 2030 Agenda depicts a renewed understanding of the world that reflect on the ongoing problems and issues in the timeframe considered. The list of goals and their prioritisation shows an actualised vision of social objectivity. I consider that the 2030 Agenda can be acknowledged as the latest foundation along with the UN Charter, or the Human Rights declaration due to the prospects, objectives and level of commitment at stake. Hence, it is worth to take a comprehensive assessment because of its recent implementation and ongoing application. For the UN as political project, it implies a major commitment with serious implications for the viability of the organisation. The UN can be seriously questioned if the results are weak or irrelevant.

Concerning the analytical aim of this section, this document offers a rich articulation of signifiers, examples and references, which, as I argue, show a definitive aspect of a hegemonic articulation. Therefore, all of the statements selected include accounts of objectivity and subjectivity that are relevant for this case. In terms of discourse, this kind of document includes expressions and language known for an elaborated rhetoric and all-encompassing discourse. In this sort of declaration, it is also common for the preamble, introduction and first sections to contain the most significant pronouncements. For the analysis, the sections of the Preamble and Declaration are reviewed in detail. In relation to the latter, the sections presented are as follows: 'Our vision', 'Our shared principles and commitments', 'Our world today,' 'The new agenda' and 'A call for action to change our world'.

These first extracts from the preamble exemplify the relevance of the Agenda,

This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We¹²⁴ recognise that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet

sustainable development. For the official website, see:
<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>.

¹²⁴ In the text, "We" refers to the "Heads of State and Government and High Representatives" p.3.

These two examples indicate the interests and logic behind this document. The text declares that this is the “new universal Agenda”, while sustainable development is the core concept and goal. This concept considers three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. Additionally, the goals cover five areas: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. In more specific terms, the 2030 Agenda aims to strengthen human rights, achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The following paragraph is from the Declaration’s introduction; in this part, the importance and reach of the actions taken are detailed,

This is an Agenda of unprecedented scope and significance. It is accepted by all countries and is applicable to all, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. These are universal goals and targets which involve the entire world, developed and developing countries alike. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development.

This is an interesting statement considering the logic of difference because it makes all the actors available in a specific level (all countries, developed and developing countries) part of the project. A set of guidelines (principles and universal goals) ground different actions. This position aims to bring together a wide range of actors. In the following section, “Our vision”, the current account of social objectivity that the UN promotes is presented. Hence, it is necessary to quote at length,

In these Goals and targets, we are setting out a supremely ambitious and transformational vision. We envisage a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive. We envisage a world free of fear and violence. A world with universal literacy. A world with equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels, to health care and social protection

We envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity. A world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. A just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met.

We envisage a world in which every country enjoys sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all. A world in which consumption and production patterns and use of all natural resources are sustainable. One in which democracy, good governance and the rule of law as well as an enabling environment at national and international levels, are essential for sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger.

The content of these paragraphs includes an extensive list of problems, issues, and goals that a socio-political project may deal with. Nonetheless, what I consider as the most relevant aspect in this kind of statements is the way the vision of social objectivity develops a hegemonic stance by different moves. I am neither downplaying the content and relevance of achieving better conditions nor questioning why or how these goals must be fulfilled. The analytical concern here points elsewhere. In the case of the hegemonic setting, the concern includes the moves that allow a socio-political project to achieve a leading position. I consider that, discursively, these paragraphs present various aspects of hegemonic articulation. My aim now is to bring out the different discursive moves to achieve this.

In Chapter 2, I referred to the ontological and ontic references while articulating a vision of social objectivity. The previous paragraphs provide a good example of this. The vision of objectivity is presented by indistinctly overlapping the ontological and ontic levels. In this case, the normative frame with the considerations of universal peace, freedom, equality, inclusiveness or global solidarity plays the grounding role at the ontological level. These notions are framed as essential foundations from which the whole view of the United Nations as social objectivity is discursively articulated. The text evokes a desired state of affairs; a description of which areas of social life need improvement follows this dimension. The interesting point here is to notice the means through which the foundations will be achieved. Democracy, good governance, the rule of law or other policies are the (ontic) means or strategies for how the procedural display will take place. The final step is to define the areas chosen to act (economic, social and environmental), the problem addressed (poverty) and the targeted social groups (children and women).

Following my suggestion for analysis, there are three parts in the account of social objectivity that come across as deeply interrelated. The initial move is to define the conditions for the possibility of freedom or peace. This ontological question depends on the implementation of particular measures (democracy or good governance) in specified issues. In this way, the project, through a set of principles, covers education and health care along with calls for good governance, equality, inclusiveness and labour issues. These issues are the ones that connect an account of subjectivity with the political dimension of the project. They also offer better settings for certain subjectivities that specific conditions permanently marginalise. The solutions for the social problems are attached to specific forms of governance, and even these are mentioned in a general way. In the last paragraph, for instance, particular areas (natural world) are linked to strategic actions (inclusive and sustainable economic growth) that are based on an ethical base or social responsibility (consumption and production patterns). Different

levels and ways of governing human activity together with forms of administering natural resources are presented as part of the same objective.

Referring back to the text, the following section is “our world today”. It reads,

Billions of our citizens continue to live in poverty and are denied a life of dignity. There are rising inequalities within and among countries. There are enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power. Gender inequality remains a key challenge. Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a major concern

From this gloomy depiction, the mood changes in these terms,

Significant progress has been made in meeting many development challenges. Within the past generation, hundreds of millions of people have emerged from extreme poverty. Access to education has greatly increased for both boys and girls. It is also, however, a time of immense opportunity

This is an example of how the dual setting of hope/tragedy appears again, as it did in several of the previously included pieces for analysis. This situation is a point of identification in favour of the hegemonic project in that the common identity is jeopardised if the eradication and solution of the problems do not happen. In this way, the UN’s actions are required to at least keep a status quo of the substantial dilemmas that the community faces. In terms of practical issues, this section includes a groundbreaking statement: It claims that “hundreds of millions of people have emerged from extreme poverty”.¹²⁵

The following section in the document is “The new Agenda”. It explains the commitments, motivations, expected results and social benefits that the Agenda can achieve. Point 35 mentions the importance of sustainable development, which can be considered in relation to our case for analysis,

Sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. The new Agenda recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions. Factors which give rise to violence, insecurity and injustice, such as inequality, corruption, poor governance and illicit financial and arms flows, are addressed in the Agenda.

¹²⁵ This is a controversial issue that I will further address in the conclusions.

This paragraph shows a new nodal point, sustainable development, articulated as a part of the discourse. This is a new social demand that current circumstances prompt. As a result of this, the whole discourse renovates its content and identity. In this articulation, three core issues (sustainable development, peace and security) are considered as dependent and their conditions of possibility attached hereby; in turn, this brings other social and political features (inclusive society, access to justice, respect for human rights) that also are regarded indispensable. In opposition, the factors mentioned in the last sentence are that external negative, or ‘antagonist’, elements that show the limits of what sustainable development can be. These are the elements haunting and preventing the fulfilment of the UN’s vision of the world. In addition, point 36 reads as follows,

We pledge to foster inter-cultural understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and an ethic of global citizenship and shared responsibility. We acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognize that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development.

In this paragraph, the novel issue is that the term ‘global citizenship’ becomes a new reference for the whole account of social objectivity. Being, a ‘global citizen’ represents a point of identification at the ‘top layer’ of a multilevel identity that the subject is considered to perform. In this context, the ‘global citizen’ stands for a point of communion¹²⁶ that articulate more specific concerns than the mythical but diffuse, “We the people of the United Nations”. On the other hand, I consider that a contradictory point comes with the acknowledgement of ‘all cultures and civilisations’ (diversity), while a homogenising notion such as the global citizen is also mobilised. For instance, it does not detail how many ‘civilisations’ there are or what constitutes them. However, this is an example how the hegemonic discourse is capable of including any available signifier in order to expand the logic of difference. These two cases exemplify Laclau’s (1990: 63-4) claim that if the imaginary becomes successful, it is able to add new social demands thus changing the content of the original demands. In this case, the ‘global citizen’ is placed as the subject that transcends any difference (covering from the local to ‘civilizations’) and embodies the unity of the project. The reference to this “privileged agent” is what Laclau considers as the logic of incarnation (1990).

The final example of the 2030 Agenda, and for concluding the whole analytical task, includes five points in the section, “A call for action to change our world”. In the document, these points include the last request for support before all the explanation

¹²⁶ I discussed elsewhere the political dimension and issues of identity associated with the figure of global citizen and its relationship with the current international institutional framework. See: Iglesias, 2018.

of the 17 goals is presented. All the points have something relevant for the analysis, therefore, I quote at length.

49. Seventy years ago, an earlier generation of world leaders came together to create the United Nations. From the ashes of war and division they fashioned this Organisation and the values of peace, dialogue and international cooperation which underpin it. The supreme embodiment of those values is the Charter of the United Nations

50. Today we are also taking a decision of great historic significance. We resolve to build a better future for all people, including the millions who have been denied the chance to live decent, dignified and rewarding lives and to achieve their full human potential. We can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet. The world will be a better place in 2030 if we succeed in our objectives

51. What we are announcing today 'an Agenda for global action for the next fifteen years' is a charter for people and planet in the twenty-first century. Children and young women and men are critical agents of change and will find in the new Goals a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world

52. "We the Peoples" are the celebrated opening words of the UN Charter. It is "We the Peoples" who are embarking today on the road to 2030. Our journey will involve Governments as well as Parliaments, the UN system and other international institutions, local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific and academic community 'and all people. Millions have already engaged with, and will own, this Agenda.

53. The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today's younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations. We have mapped the road to sustainable development; it will be for all of us to ensure that the journey is successful and its gains irreversible

In the arrangement of the original document, these points close what can be considered the first part of the Declaration. Consequently, the style of enunciation appeals to the transcendental side of the endeavour. The first point confirms the tone of vindication that this declaration entails for the UN as a whole socio-political project. In these paragraphs, the imaginary of closure and fulfilment appears with the discourse's teleological dimension. The temporality that is displayed links three stages: the past evoked in point 49 with the foundation of the UN; the current times with "Today we are also taking a decision of great historic significance"; and, finally, "We resolve to build a better future for all people". In this way, the hegemonic actor occupies and claim all the temporality available. The three stages become an intrinsic part of the project. The paragraphs illustrate the different lines that keep together the three parts I previously discussed. In this way, the foundations of the project (values,) the aims (e.g. to build a better future, ending poverty), the social space (world) and the different

subjectivities involved (generation of world leaders, children, and young women and men) are connected in the same space and project. Notably, selected groups (local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific and academic community) are mentioned for the first time as part of the collective identity.

6.6 Conclusion: the quest for hegemony in perspective

My goal in these closing remarks is to provide a general overview of the most relevant issues related to my analytical argument and the prospects of social objectivity that emerged from these four sections.

6.6.1 Articulation and visual representation

Post-foundational and poststructural discursive perspectives have taught us to think through the contingent character of any formation, actor or dynamic involved in the social. In terms of discourse, this implies that the meaning invested in a signifier and an entire discourse and identity is never settled and is open to contestation. In the case proposed for this chapter, the first point that I want to address is the foundations that make the United Nations a socio-political project and formation. It is necessary, then, to consider the hegemonic practices (Åkerstrøm Andersen, 2002) that articulate a whole account of social objectivity. The first step is to go back and look at the moment of decision. In other words, it is important to consider the moment when the lines were drawn, when the foundations were established, and when issues were included or excluded. The foundations are those elements that underpin the whole project and vision of objectivity. I contend that when the foundations are settled, they provide an ontological dimension to the project in the sense that these ascribe a reason for being to the rest of elements.

I assert that in the scenario proposed for hegemony, and in relation to discursivity, the foundations —namely the values and principles— are visible in the extracts from the UN Charter, the Millennium Declaration and the 2030 Agenda.¹²⁷ In these documents the abstraction of some meaningful elements, such as ‘unity, freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance [and] inclusiveness’, conforms to the normative core of the

¹²⁷ I consider rather interesting to see how these documents play the role of a ‘holy book’ due to their content and significance.

project. As I argued in the analysis, these elements perform a double utility if we consider their use as nodal points within the discourse. Additionally, they are the mythical foundations of the project. In general terms, these foundations become the first references on which other elements of the discourse rely. These notions work as a foundation, and yet they concurrently set the teleological horizon of the project. At the same time, it can also be said that they remain as empty signifiers in the sense that they are never endowed with a definitive content. The addition of new social demands (sustainable development) to the discourse necessarily affects the previous meaning.

Through the analysis, it was possible to recognise that one of the strategies to develop a hegemonic stance is to overlap the ontological and ontic dimensions in the discursive presentation of the project. If we place the foundations at the ontological level, these delimit the 'being' of the project. Moreover, they outline what it means to be 'united' or 'free'. Simultaneously, the ontic dimension comprises strategies, programmes and campaigns that are relevant to achieve union or any other foundation. Another significant point that came about is the essentialist logic mobilised with the account of social objectivity. The values and principles, for instance, are projected under a universal base. This is noticed in the way the common identity appeals to all the social levels involved. In terms of discourse, the permanent promotion of a set of values considered as universal has an implication for the social and political actors (subjects, governments, or international institutions) that belong to the project.

Concerning the investment of meaning and its importance for any socio-political project, the discursive and visual analyses exposed some of the moves that establish a hegemonic stance. My argument considers that, due to the aims and wide range of the issues included in the account of social objectivity, this UN has a hegemonic position in reference to the social space addressed. In other words, the discourse attempts to bring order to this space. This is theorised with the concept of the logic of difference. The point, in consequence, is to understand and show the manner in which this actor expands its horizon of action. The expansion, in this case, has a basic scheme. As noted, the hegemonic actor inevitably needs to address as many elements available and touch all possible layers of social groups and demands in the social scenario. All elements and layers are relevant to the project to avoid sources of rejection. Discourse theory explains this as the construction of the chain of differences. This chain is present in the meaning, or identity, of the signifiers included and the different groups in the social space. Any project aiming for hegemony is bound to attend to most of the social demands. This situation increases the presence of the hegemonic actor and establishes a wider base for the common identity that the actors participating in the project experience.

In the first title, unity, peace and freedom stand out as the nodal points. A subsequent expansion of the discourse includes a wide range of issues. It was also possible to follow how the inclusion of new elements as nodal points is part of the dynamic for keeping the privileged position. In this way, the hegemonic project adapts its content and capacity to deal with new or changing situations that affect the social space. For instance, I am referring the way sustainable development has been equated to the historical aims of the actor. In the UNU's poster, sustainable development is included, but it has a secondary role. In contrast, it is the core concept in the current UN discourse. In the extracts presented from the 2030 Agenda, it was possible to see the discourse sutured when sustainable development became aligned with the conditions of the possibility of peace and security.

The second part of the analysis presented the ways disarmament, peacekeeping, science and education, hunger and environmental concerns appear as part of the articulation. As noticed, the discursive articulation of a diversity of problems brings the play of meaning under a logic that establishes connections among them. Addressing overpopulation, for instance, necessarily entails environmental concerns. These concerns are directly related to natural disasters, or to modes of production and consumption. Armed conflicts will trigger, among other problems, displaced persons, refugees, hunger and malnutrition. These issues affect all those levels of actorness recognised in the discourse. The duty of controlling and managing the problems is a major objective for the political organisations acting internationally, nationally and locally.

Concerning how the subject is framed in relation to a governmental framework, the Millennium Declaration features a clear example of how the discourse constructs a frame of subjectivity in relation to a socio-political project. In the articulation of the values that underpinned the actions considered in this Declaration, there are direct indications of the relation between the subject and the normative and political structure advocated. Working on the understanding that these values have a universal base, the text associates the values¹²⁸ with the subject and the project's views of social objectivity. In this sense, the views project a subject with social and political rights. Social relations are based on diversity rather than on discrimination, equality or solidarity. This last point is extended to the countries and international level, thus grounding this feature as part of the actions in all levels and actors involved.

In addition, with the discursive frame, it was possible to distinguish some of the manoeuvres that are necessary in a hegemonic context. The discourse is based on a basic dichotomy from which the horizon of possibilities is presented. This dichotomy has a

¹²⁸ E.g. freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility.

positive/negative logic that appears under different contexts: unity/division, internal/external, peace/war, balance/instability or hope/fear. Taking the internal/external binary, the positive aspects are internal to the project; the fulfilment of the principles, values and foundations belong only to one side. This side represents the hope, while the opposite side means war, poverty, hunger, etc. The relation of mutual determination and exclusion in a binary division characterises the possibilities of the project and the social space. The discourse is based on sharp dichotomies of 'being/not being', in which a positive side is dependent on the opposite. This duality is a way to see the tension of necessity and contingency. It points to how any structure, actor or political project is incomplete and 'vulnerable'. Otherwise, the negative scenario would not be part of the equivalence.

I explain the dichotomies in more detail using some of the visual representations of the world as social space and the UN as the actor through this context of hegemony. Taking 'unity' as the bedrock of the socio-political project behind this actor, I attempt to show how this signifier appears in the internal (positive) /external (negative) duality. The poster celebrating Peacekeepers Day is an example of how the positive aspect of unity is highlighted. The visual display in this image relates the effort to bring and maintain peace to a set of institutions, organisations and practices. The positive aspect is presented as internal to the project; then, the discourse features new notions as 'global partnership'. In this way, all the elements (acronyms, figures, etc.) included in the image are linked in the practices and the effort to achieve peace under the perspective of this actor.

As Claude Lefort argues in regard to the necessity to represent any society on the base of a unitary element, the representation takes place through the establishment of boundaries (Norval, 1996: 4). The interesting case on my analysis is that the boundaries are the risk of not 'being united' in problematic situations. Unity and the positive aspects of the aims became the hallmark of the hegemonic actor. Considering the first examples of UN Charter and the first image presented to the last case of the Agenda 2030, the appeal for unity becomes the central concern for the project. Discursively, in certain junctures (e.g. major armed conflicts, environmental concerns, health crises), the UN serves as the driving force to deal with societal problems.

When analysing the pieces, I mentioned that the hope/tragedy duality appears as a discursive feature. This situation, in certain way, becomes a point of identification of the actions that the actor must take in order to ensure the success of the project. The posters of the United Nations University (UNU) and "We have a choice" regarding armament control are examples of this situation. They present contrasting possibilities and settings according to the issues addressed. While in the former, the actions of the

UNU and the role of education are projected into a dual setting of possibilities; the latter links the future of humankind with specific actions. In both posters, overcoming or not overcoming the problems implies the intervention and mobilisation of material and conceptual resources. When the project encounters a negative scenario, the harmful end reinforces the role and significance of this actor.

Having this reference, I comment on what emerged from the visual analysis. It is worth mentioning the visual aspects of this duality. Chromatically, some pieces illustrate a generalised understanding of the identification of a negative or dangerous situation with one colour (red) or darker tones, while a positive scenario displays a wide array of colours (the 'institutional blue' as in the peacekeeping poster). This same logic works with symbols or other conceptual references that were conveyed visually. For instance, smiling faces and the figure of the dove and the olive branch counteract the skull images and the silhouettes of bombs. Even in the images that deal with specific issues and problems, the symbols, representations, and meaningful references show some patterns of relatedness. The interconnection of these different issues reveals a link that sometimes could not be appreciated at first glance. The intertextual feature of an image helps to appreciate those 'hidden' connections.

This feature was clearly appreciated in those elements that fostered the visions of social objectivity. The elements became a commonplace means to elaborate the visual dimension of the discourse. However, I consider that the notion of unity is ubiquitous, openly or symbolically, in the majority of the pieces I analysed. The members of a multicultural and ethnical community, that surround the world and coexist regardless of their origin or condition, represent unity. This sentiment of fellowship is reinforced with expressions such as 'our world' or 'our planet', which aim to activate the sentiment of belonging. Such expressions connect the space and the common identity promoted. Visually, the most recurrent point of identification is the planetary viewpoint that evokes engagement while presenting the uniqueness of the planet and its commonality for humankind. The compositional and spatial organisation of the pictorial elements emphasises the engagement of the people, the UN and the planet. The images feature elements that combine real and symbolic elements, which are fused with the visions of social objectivity of the project. The viewer or receiver is addressed as part of the same collective identity, or, in the cases where specific problems affect persons, the aim is to evoke an empathetic reaction to the case presented.

When displaying the focal points and rhetorical organisation, there is a link between the set of values and the identity that the element of hegemony promotes with the different elements, layers, actors and institutions that take part in the formation. As pointed out in the analysis, the globe without land and/or the land without frontiers

bring a depoliticised image of the social space or formation. These points seek to establish a bond with viewers and make an appeal for their involvement. This issue discursively relates to the productivity, level of persuasion and matters of authority in the images. In the pieces involving disarmament or hunger, for example, the productivity of the pieces leads one to consider the necessary intervention (persuasion) and further actions (level of authority) in those serious questions. The legitimacy of the hegemonic actor is confirmed and depends on these three aspects that were noted in the discourse. In the same way, the levels of persuasion and authority will have an impact on the common identity that is required for the project. As I explained, one of the characteristics of hegemony is to cover the widest set of demands involving a multilevel arrange of political actors and social groups.

6.6.2 The identities within

The way the logic of difference takes place in the expansion of the hegemonic project is one of the main issues addressed in the analysis. Compared to the other works discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the analysis of collective identity in this setting showed the possibility of a visible antagonist-other. In the previous section, I mentioned that the central manoeuvre to consolidate the presence of the discourse in a social space is the inclusion of a wide set of social demands that would include social groups (identities). The case of the UN has specific characteristics because it represents a socio-political project, but it lacks a direct mandate over a territory and population. Nonetheless, I argue that this is exactly what makes this case an interesting example to explore. I am referring to the variety of actors included, the layers touched, and the different ways identity is conformed to in the discourse. The aim in this section is to explain and understand the different layers of groups and identities that take part and how the 'we' is appealed to in the discourse.

From the foundational "We the people of the United Nations" up to the late calls to develop a 'global citizenship', the common identity also includes 'heads of state, 'united nations' and the 'United Nations'. This complex and multifaceted identity permeates all these actors but not without paradoxes and contradictions. In the discourse, the common identity is the basis where all the actors involved converge. The point is to unveil who constitutes the common identity. This identity has a definitive characteristic: There is no 'other' from which the 'we' differentiates. This is the moment when the logic of difference appears and 'deactivates' any (hypothetical) oppositional feature conforming one main aspect of the hegemonic stance. It is based on a principle

of homogenisation that intends to conceal sources of antagonism (e.g. historic rivalries, nationalism). The relevance of the hegemonic project depends on neutralising all differences through the social and political fields involved. In this circumstance, the conditions of possibility of the hegemonic project play with the double setting of diversity and homogeneity at different levels. While some social features (religious diversity, multicultural communities) and values are recognised as common and universal, and thus as essentially heterogeneous, the political and economic framework points to homogenous practices and institutions. I consider that this ‘diversity in homogeneity’ aspect is the most significant feature grounding the collective identity. This aspect nullifies any possible claim of antagonism as no political barriers seem to harm the coexistence among humans. Regarding the nation-states, the membership to the UN represents implicit support of the socio-political project promoted. This idea of homogeneity and the ‘one world scenario’ correspond with the idea of completeness or the possibility to fulfil an undisputed ground under a certain organisational framework.

Notably, national identity is barely mentioned, directly, at the ‘personal level’. References to single countries, or even to nations, are avoided for strategic reasons. Posters with national flags as pictorial elements appeared occasionally in the pieces analysed. In the two images¹²⁹ including flags, antagonism is avoided by framing an unproblematic coexistence of countries under the UN framework and by using the representation of children as a neutral and no political reference. Obviously, the national identity of the person is not denied; in the discursive practice, it becomes less visible when the collective identity is mentioned.

In addition, it is necessary to review the different layers and levels of the groups inside the ‘UN identity’. This identity overlaps with and includes a mix of social and political actors (the UN system, national governments, parliaments, local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector, etc.) that all refer to and follow the foundations that underpin the account of social objectivity. In the 2030 Agenda, diverse groups are linked and evoked indistinctly; in consequence, actors such as the UN system, indigenous peoples, business and the private sector and the scientific and academic community are all equated in the project. This is a genuine example of a chain of differences embodied in these groups. Starting from the ‘personal level’, the individual is often mentioned or addressed as part of the common identity developed from the project. The inclusion of practically ‘every human being’ into the collective identity makes diversity the hallmark of the project. This collective identity is the sum of individuals sorted by any condition (ethnicity, age group, gender, etc.). Social difference is presented as an asset, and the inclusive character of this consideration is

¹²⁹ No. 3 (p. 130) and No. 17(p. 154).

the one expected from a hegemonic stance. The notion of equity, for instance, is visually presented through the inclusion of this multiplicity and the avoidance of any discrimination or exclusion. For instance, the socially disadvantaged groups play a decisive role in the discursive articulation and structural organisation of the actor. Specific subjects (children or elderly people) that appeal to a sense of belonging represent the collective identity. The images that depict populations in difficult situations are examples of the fact that the hegemonic project considers every possible social group. On the other hand, the subject has a certain capacity and is expected to act in specific ways.

The binary setting of positive (empowered) and negative (disadvantaged) situations affects the possibilities of the individual. In the 2030 Agenda, for example, the text refers to the same social group in contrasting ways. For instance, young people are alluded to in the descriptions “the millions who have been denied” and “agents of change”. In this way, the achievement or resolution of the wide range of issues concerning the world involves the action of the common identity. Whether individually or collectively, local, national or international, all the actors involved are demanded to act. However, as I suggested, the discourse promoted has changed when compared to more recent pieces. In a couple of pieces, the call for action has an ‘individualistic’ logic in which the communitarian benefit is not highlighted or celebrated. In most of the images and texts reviewed from the first decades of the UN, the common identity is called to act as an ‘undividable we’ that shares responsibilities and fate. On the contrary, the posters ‘Paint Your World Orange’ and ‘Seven Billion Dreams’ suggest a different way of enouncing the collective identity and its actions. In the latter poster, unity develops because of ‘individual actions’. Individual actions seem to replace the indivisibility of the “we the people of the world” that was represented with human chains or multicultural collages.

A sharp contrast also appears in the practical, but still hierarchical, division between governors/governed or givers/receivers. The part of the ‘we’ with the political power appears here. As I stated when reviewing the 2030 Agenda, the identity of leaders is fully displayed when the aims, solutions and challenges are explained in the document. Hence, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives represent another face of the ‘we’. Let us remember that in the documents reviewed, this group acts as a representative of the peoples of the world and appears as the ‘operative’ part of the identity promoted (the ‘we’ with the capability to act). ‘They’ have the assumed role of ‘leaders’ and ‘emancipators’ in relation to the rest of the people who are part of the identity. Therefore, the actors in charge (the UN and member states) appear as the

legitimate providers of solutions. The representability of these 'leaders' reinforces the universal reach and legitimacy of the project.

As I highlighted with the 2030 Agenda, the reference to 'global citizenship' implies a new step of identification. This figure represents what Laclau considers as the privileged subject with a transcendental role to fulfil (1990). Beyond the different schools of thought and debates about the possibilities to achieve and enforce a citizenship at this level, my interest here is to point out what this sort of identity implies for a hegemonic project. The use of the term 'global' hints at an adaptation of the discourse to the current historical conjuncture. In terms of hegemony, the situation of framing a figure such as the 'global citizen', or the subject embodying a total identity, is to put forward a reference that seems 'neutral' because a source of contention (nationalism) is concealed.

The global citizen represents an identity that seeks to achieve total inclusion and connection among persons worldwide. In practice, it seems to be a complementary identity to the foundational 'We the peoples of the United Nations'. Nonetheless, it is important to notice which kind of organisations and actors are behind promoting this idea and the visions of social objectivity that come with such a figure. Organisations (e.g. the World Bank and World Economic Forum) that have a specific social, political and economic agenda have advocated the main reference of this figure. The support of this made-up 'universal' reference it is a particularised version that conceals the support of specific policies (e.g. economic neoliberalism).

To close this section, I summarise some discursive elements that work for the consolidation of hegemony. One basic element of identification is the way the 'we' is presented as the actor that is capable of facing the challenge of dealing with all the problems that affect the world. This identity thrives in a context of teleological transcendence acting on behalf of present and future generations. Another outstanding point in the visual elements is the multicultural community depicted through the different contexts and issues addressed in the images. This kind of representation reflects on the diminishment of antagonism and shows the potential setting of a positive social configuration. Linking the social space and one level of actorness (personal level) is a key move for promoting the collective identity of the project. The visual representation delivers a sense of belonging through the spatial relation of sharing a given place. This community appeared with the spatial view of the earth, and, together, they become one significant visual aspect that emphasises the universality of the enterprise. As seen before, union appears in different and evocative ways in the images analysed. Similarly, I contend that the normative frame and the UN as an institution that works for the world's benefit provide a base of legitimacy as well.

6.6.3 Hegemony and the setting of final foundation

In this part, I focus on a particular aspect that appears in any account of social objectivity but that is rarely addressed. The prospect of accomplishment or final foundation is by far one of the less discussed dimensions in the visions of social objectivity. Working through a post-foundational perspective, I see that the setting of final foundation appears when the visions of social objectivity contain a whole background of teleological references in which fullness implies that power relations and conflict are finally settled. This issue does not solely concern the goal of achieving a certain condition (world peace) or the explicit strategy behind the goal (cooperation, form of governance, etc.); rather, it also considers the connection between the grounds of the project with its hypothetical end. I do this by examining the different logics acting upon the meaning invested in the accounts of objectivity and with Laclau's concept of imaginary. I argue that the key aspects behind the possibility of a final foundation are the aspirational aspect and the promise of fulfilment. The strategy involves looking inside the 'essence of the project'. This involves conceptually deconstructing the claim, the discourse and the conditions of the possibility of the setting of culmination. There are significant points that can be distinguished from the discursive perspective. As I previously explained, one of the 'operative' features in a poststructuralist theorisation of discourse is the constitutive aspect and the possibility of the discourse to define the conditions of something. In my conceptual frame, this is the 'discursivity in action'. The fixation of meaning and further articulation has a sense of performativity for the conceptual elements that underpin the project. In the words of Derrida, the metaphysics of presence are noticed due to entering the constitutive logics of the claims and hierarchies.

The foundations claim what is inherent to the project; then, the aspirational aspect and the promise of consummation overlap with the teleological and emancipatory character of the project. For Laclau, this foundational moment is when myths provide a degree of certainty and order to the social field. The discursive display of the foundations (union, peace or security) is articulated and projected to make the visualisation of a final foundation possible. This ontological definition is followed by a proclamation of the time and space in which the project develops. The logic of 'a better future world' depends on this proclamation. Let us turn our attention to spatiality and temporality. The UN, as a socio-political project, has the characteristic of not having a defined territory and population, but, at the same time, it has a presence worldwide at different levels. Consequently, the discourse can claim the whole social space at stake.

In this way, hegemony is constructed by this sort of ubiquity and a privileged position. Union is the central notion behind the entire account.

If space is claimed, time is also part of the articulation. The 'whole world' is in the balance, and the present and future depend on the hegemonic actor. For instance, deconstruction shows a positive/negative dichotomy that fluctuates depending on the success of the hegemonic project. At times, the discourse turns into a messianic dispatch in which, without the work and leadership of the hegemonic actor, the social formation is condemned. For example, the teleological dimension reaches dramatic tones with statements such as, "We may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet". In contrast, there are statements such as, "The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands" and "The world will be a better place in 2030 if we succeed in our objectives". These statements also reflect what I previously mentioned about the exceptional character or historic subject that is linked with the collective identity and the account of objectivity. These sorts of statements build the universalist pretension that is projected into time and space. The temporal possibility of the hegemonic project is grounded in a dual perspective of continuation or rupture. Moreover, positive and negative possibilities are reflected in a temporal circumstance. All actions and hopes, as well as dangers and threats, are linked to the dual scenario.

I consider that the discursive analysis showed that the imaginary develops in a positive scenario that encloses a dimension of fullness: This is where all the foundations and goals should be achieved. To illustrate this, I refer to the environmental concerns that are part of the account of the social objectivity presented. In the images and quotations, this topic reaches an existential dimension for the world, humankind and, in this case, the role of the UN as a key actor. For political gains, either scenario within the dichotomy favours the work of this actor. In the setting of threat, the role of the hegemonic actor implies finding solutions or at least maintaining some viability for these concerns. In this sense, the actions of the collective identity (social level) and operative actors (political level) must converge to literally 'save the world'. The message demands a sense of unity through the actions to assure the ecological viability of the planet. It turns out that this realisation always stays ahead, in the future. This is where the imaginary of 'one better future world' takes place. The aspirational aspect and promise of consummation are fused into an imaginary reference. An interesting aspect is 'the representativeness of future'. Visually, the triumphant figure of the dove and the unproblematic coexistence of the multicultural community of the world convey the idea of the final foundation, which can only possibly occur within the project. The fulfilment of the unproblematic coexistence is the realisation of the myth transformed into the permanent imaginary of the 'united nations'. I consider that, for instance, the 2030

Agenda is a 'quasi' imaginary in that it has fulfilled certain aspects and social demands, but it is also overloaded with new meanings and references (global citizenship). Yet, as post-foundational thinking argues, this is only partial and limited.

6.6.4 The limits of the hegemonic quest

I conclude this setting of hegemony following the idea of the previous line. In this final section, I focus on the limitations and inherent contradictions that can be underlined in reference to the hegemonic quest. In the analysis, I mentioned those internal sources of tension and contradiction that affect the project. In this case, in line with other analysis (Herschinger, 2012), the limits can be located in the practices and the application of policies. One notorious example is the limitations of the UN at the operational level of the institution (Security Council vetoes or permanent political divisions held by the great powers). These internal disputes can be seen as part of the ontic practices that affect the operation of certain internal institutions. As I explained before, this is not the area that this work directly addresses. However, with this example, I can highlight an important link to my analytical scope.

Starting with issues of identity, the project 'expands' in the social space in the same way that the common identity does. The common identity, personalised as 'we', takes the whole social space. There is no antagonistic other constituting the internal content of the collective identity. Antagonism is ruled out because the system of differences situates 'we' as the only possible collective identity that includes all the actors in the social space. Nonetheless, the paradox, in this case, is that the 'we' itself threatens the 'we'. The attempt to constitute a comprehensive identity is in constant tension as certain actors partially assume this identity. The limitations of the hegemonic project lie in those forms of identification that are unable to transcend to full representativeness. The characteristics of one type of the actors (states) represent a gap that shows the limitations of the project. The level of the common identity that condenses all the problems and source of tensions is the 'nation state'. The largest source of problems and threats, such as armed conflicts, armament, security, hunger and environmental pollution, are the direct responsibilities (provoking or controlling) mostly associated with one kind of actor (national governments/states). This is the greatest paradox running at this level: The main political actor and member of the UN threatens or pacifies the 'inter-national'.

In the account of social objectivity that the UN constructed, antagonism among nations was concealed to promote a common identity. The desired community grew

since the UN foundation and the convergence of nations developed, while a great part of the world was (considered to be) divided into two antagonistic poles. The setting of confrontation/cooperation evolved with the UN. While cooperation (e.g. decolonisation, increase in UN member states, the Group of 77) was an important fact to consolidate the project, conflict (Korean War as the first source of tension and other armed conflict) was also a significant feature in the same period. According to discourse theory, there are two points that explain this issue. One is that the structure is unable to escape the process of structuration; in this case, the hegemonic actor is unable to control the whole space. The gaps (antagonism) prevented the collective effort (UN identity) from achieving a more stable coexistence. Situations of conflict or political tension (Cold War context) point to a certain antagonism that remained unresolved. Thus, the second point, according to discourse theory, antagonism shows the contingencies that affect the social and, in consequence, the hegemonic formation. The overall issue is the failure to make a more stable identification that could have prevented political divisions. These divisions were present at the ideological level but also existed through national identities. The system of equivalences was tamed, to some extent, in order to present this vision as a foundational one. However, even though the actors involved (member states of the organisation) had a shared foundation (peaceful world and international cooperation), a dislocatory event (armed conflicts) hampered further political cooperation. The UN's vision of the world supported was unable to generate a full political commitment and provide the member states with the complete implementation and respect for international treaties on different matters.¹³⁰ I consider that in this case, there was a hegemonic configuration (the increased number of member states and international cooperation) with concurrent internal sources of antagonism (ideological division).

Certainly, there are omissions that become problematic when a hegemonic project tries to cover the full spectrum of socio-political issues that concern it. In the analysis, I noted some issues that I consider as causes of tension. The promotion of policies in specific areas is another major point of contradiction that is internal to the UN's account of social objectivity. I refer to the economic policies that have characterised the organisations related to this area. In fact, the economic sphere shows paradoxes, structural problems and practices that could generate tensions and major problems for the project. For instance, the Millennium Declaration mentions the importance of the economic organisations linked to the UN (Bretton Woods' institutions), and they are

¹³⁰ I do not intend to diminish the importance and advance in human rights, education, social equality, and other issues. My point is to highlight those inconsistencies that occur in any socio-political project.

considered as central actors for achieving the aims of the Declaration. The reduction of poverty has been attributed to certain policies that these institutions advocate;¹³¹ in contrast, economic and social inequalities are deepening in developed and underdeveloped countries.¹³² In addition, in the Millennium Declaration, globalisation is regarded as ‘positive’, though it acknowledges that there are matters in need of improvement. The issues of poverty and certain aspects related to the process of globalisation¹³³ (economic liberalisation) are a rupture point among individuals and social groups that support other bodies of the UN. This situation exemplifies the gaps and contradictions within the collective identity that the UN represents.

In the 2030 Agenda, the discourse acknowledges rising economic inequalities and gender disparities while also including this statement: “[H]undreds of millions of people have emerged from extreme poverty”.¹³⁴ Here, the problematic issue is the major omission of the systemic conditions that cause what is trying to be solved. In general, the discourse lacks a self-critical stance, remaining silent about those conditions that the economic system is not including, such as the re-distribution of economic wealth. In many countries where the structural reforms and related market-oriented policies that the International Monetary Fund or other economic organisations promote, the social inequality has widened to an unprecedented extent. The current economic practices and policies have obviously affected other areas. In the analysis, I include many examples in which the environmental topic is the main concern. In one of these,¹³⁵ the message is “consume with care”. This is the other contradiction because it is not questioning the economic (extraction and pollution of natural resources) and trade policies that underpin the core of the economic agenda that certain inter-governmental organisations related to the Bretton Woods system promote. It calls for respect towards nature and to responsible consumption, nonetheless the processes of massive production and consumption based on a worldwide scale imply the opposite. This is a serious contradiction within the account of social objectivity analysed. If the current patterns of production and consumption are the problem, why are the structural

¹³¹ See: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview> Accessed: 14.09.2018.

¹³² It is worth to note that even organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have recognised this trend. See: <http://www.oecd.org/social/inequality.htm>

¹³³ I am referring to the debates about the benefits and problems related to the economic model and free trade.

¹³⁴ Naturally, this sort of claims should be analysed from different perspectives. The methodology and criteria defining levels of poverty are subjective and the results on these levels can greatly differ.

¹³⁵ I refer to image 14 (p.145. United Nations Environment Programme).

conditions, logics and policies (free market economy, trade tariff reduction and exploitative labour conditions) that support these patterns not directly questioned?

The discussion that is embedded, along the same lines as the economic sphere, is the 'ideological' foundation of the UN. In the discourse, I consider that there is an ambiguous endorsement of 'liberalism'. While, in some instances, economic agencies openly promote specific policies (free market economy), in the general discourse of the UN, the economic paradigm is not called out openly, except for the Millennium Declaration. However, social and political movements (e.g. the Zapatista movement, the Landless Workers' Movement, Via Campesina, World Social Forum) have rejected the governmental framework and practices grounded on the neo-liberal economic model. Moreover, there are direct criticisms of what the UN represents, namely the liberal peace framework, which has been considered as interventionist (Richmond, 2012; Richmond and Mitchell, 2012). These situations represent the limitations and points of rupture for the UN's project and vision of the world. These limitations expose contingency and the incomplete character of any socio-political project. This is precisely one of the main points of discourse theory: hegemony and antagonism are those possible social configurations that are entangled. The exploration of discourse and identity in a context of hegemony reaches a partial conclusion at this point. In the following chapter, the discussion turns into a context where the logic of equivalence determine identity formation.

7 ONE DIVIDED WORLD AND TWO PEACE(S)

We, thus, see that the logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity

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The second conceptual setting develops under “a logic of the simplification of political space”. Moreover, in contrast with the previous expansion in the construction of hegemony, the contextualisation proposed is that there are two elements of antagonism and that the social field is divided (Laclau and Mouffe, *op. cit.*: 129). This setting addresses a discursive configuration based on negativity, with two sides attempting to occupy the centre. Thus, hegemony is disputed, or in other words, “social antagonism involves the construction of a threatening otherness that is incommensurable with the discursive system and therefore constructs its unity and limits” (Torfing, 2005:16).

For this conceptual setting, my analytical argument is to analyse the ‘discursive borders’ in which antagonism is grounded and articulated. The conceptual discussion includes the surplus of meaning that is articulated in equivalence, the constitutive feature of negativity, and the attempt to fixate meaning and to give an identity to a signifier within a divided field. The key point, within an antagonistic struggle, is the equivalence that are displayed from one identity against the opposite pole. I consider that in a context of antagonism there is a double process of sedimentation and dislocation occurring in both sides of the divided field. The explanation is that, in both sides, there is an immanent logic of fulfilment that the antagonist side lacks or is not legitimate enough to enact. Therefore, in order to analyse the discursive borders, I will address how the relations based on equivalence develops, exposing the implications on issues of identity formation and discourse that take place in opposition. Following the logic of a divided field, I will show how identity conveys the permanent negation of the other and the discursive dispute. The emphasis is on the collective identities confronted and on the articulation of meaning upon a specific reference rather than on a full discourse.

Antagonism and hegemony have been generally studied by tracing the articulation of one side’s discourse and focusing on the discursive construction of the ‘other’ (Carpentier, 2008; Herschinger, 2012; Griggs and Howarth, 2002; Mouffe, 2005; Nabers, 2015, Chapter 8). The basic logic of these analyses shows how a hegemonic

positioning need to impose limits to affirm a source of legitimacy. Those limits are the grounds of a collective identity. The constitutive relation of the inside and outside has influence in the composition of collective identities that are expressed in 'nationalist' imaginaries (Bowman, 2007). These sorts of imaginaries convey a degree of antagonism, and the latter can be performed in a violent fashion as certain conflicts based on nationalism. In cases of armed conflict, discourses of the self and the enemy are founded on basic dichotomies (good-evil, rational-irrational, civilised-barbaric) that establish normative hierarchies (Carpentier, 2008: 31).

Furthermore, antagonism can be framed as a mode of identification that involves the process of naming and the relation between the content and the form (Panizza, 2005: 3). Therefore, the symbolic aspect of representation is also a central concern in which opposing views are reflected (Féron and Hastings, 2003). For instance, a particular demand (peace) becomes a shared interest¹³⁶ from a wide range of actors that adhere to confrontation; nevertheless, the discourses overlap (Phelan and Dahlberg, op. cit.: 20). Analytically, when hegemony is disputed, representation is necessary to establish concrete calls of the Self that are discursively grounded on an empty signifier (Herschinger, op. cit.: 85; Griggs and Howarth, 2002: 56). It is argued that empty signifiers have three interrelated purposes: signify the universal, provide a name for the chain of equivalences and keep the equivalent sequence open-ended (Nabers, op. cit.: 117). In this case, it is important to consider that the dichotomies previously mentioned can be expressed through floating signifiers. Thus, these signifiers exemplify the antagonism that is discursively enacted. In the confrontation of two sides, it is also necessary to consider how the polarisation takes place through bipolar hegemony (Palonen, 2009). In this way, polarisation involves the alignment of difference facing a single frontier, which works as source of common identification (ibid.: 319). In each of these analyses, the dynamics involve opposed visions attempting to increase their position towards a hegemonic place.

The analysis that I propose will consider some of these issues mentioned, but it will attempt to show other particular aspects of antagonism as well. In this setting, my analytical argument is to look at the discursive borders dividing the field. I specifically address the investment of meaning over a specific signifier and explain the logic of equivalence. The analytical scope aims to deconstruct the discursive struggle, the claims of legitimacy and the ways discourse and identities are hierarchically constructed. The deconstructive reading and logocentrism are especially valuable references to address the legitimacy of the discourse and the politics of representation.

¹³⁶ Phelan and Dahlberg explain this situation with the political negotiations in Northern Ireland.

7.1 Making up the setting of antagonism

This conceptual setting develops through a thematic context, or as previously noted, by taking a signifier as a reference. My idea for this setting is to consider ‘peace’ as the signifier that works as a background. This signifier will be the guideline to expose the articulation that covers the formation of identity in negative terms and the manoeuvres that seek to legitimate one side over the other. Accordingly, the contextual background that suits this chapter is the idea of ideological antagonism that took place during the Cold War.¹³⁷ The pieces for analysis featured in this chapter cover a variety of actors that included world peace as part of their vision of social objectivity. This chapter comprises two parts:¹³⁸

1. We are all here on behalf of world peace...aren’t we?
2. Appropriating the symbol: The dove is white; No! It is red! Who cares... the dove is mine!

The first part focuses on identity formation and the issues of binaries and negativity. In the second part, the emphasis is on understanding the discursive dynamics of the chosen signifier, such as the chains of equivalence that form around peace and how they are linked to a vision of social objectivity. The second part also concentrates on the visual representation of peace. I considered peace as the particular signifier because of the multiple representations appearing in the actors’ accounts of objectivity. In the case of analysing conflicting situations, Jørgensen and Phillips suggest that one important aspect is to revise the struggle between different representations and their role of constituting collective identity (op. cit.: 45). The selection of the pieces for analysis followed this suggestion and I draw on the visual representation of the signifier and collective identity.

In terms of arrangement, this scenario differs from the two others to a certain extent. Instead of focusing on only one actor, the case of antagonism needed more than one vision in contention. However, this setting was by far the most challenging to develop because of the need to present two sides in an antagonist relation. The possibility of selecting actors (mostly states) was more limited because I also had to consider the discursive reference of the world. The context required a common reference in which antagonism was discursively evident. This is the reason why I chose a thematic context

¹³⁷ As with the case of the UN, the literature on the Cold war is massive, and I shall focus on those analyses focused on antagonism and within discourse theory’s scope.

¹³⁸ The titles of these sections are my way of illustrating the logic of the chapter and the research material.

as a guideline instead of only presenting two similar or related actors. For instance, many of the United Nations' posters include the dove of peace. As this drew my attention, I searched for more images (mostly digital) that featured peace or the dove as a symbol. I found many archives or collections with posters from World War I and II. However, the ones that stood out the most were some famous illustrations of the anti-communist French group *Paix et Liberté*. The group published many posters in the 1950s. The images mixed foundational visions of how the world should be and of how a 'specific menace' threatened it. Afterwards, I found the images of the 'opposite side' claiming exactly the same. The post-foundational argument related to questioning the essence was apparent in these visuals. I decided to explore the 'lack within peace' and the antagonist disposition of discourses, representations and identity in each of the selected pieces. Some of these pieces were dramatic calls for world peace, some were sarcastic illustrations, and some were the perfect example of claiming a pure presence and essence. In this type of visual, I understood the significance of visual representation and the politics of representation. It was evident in the dispute over the 'real and final' meaning and identity of peace. Considering the aspect of antagonism, I considered that the visuals would offer a better perspective of the thematic reference; hence, I mostly rely on visual material to develop the analysis and discussion. Using the frame of intertextuality, I link the content of this material. This frame allows me to see those traces of meaning that were used in this bi-polar context and to address each of these pieces that refer to peace in one way or another.

As I previously explained, it is necessary to address the content and status of the research material through the logic of this dissertation. In this scenario, it is particularly important to consider the contextualisation of concepts and the content of the pieces for analysis. The significance of this contextualisation lies in the reference of a divided social space. Certainly, discussing the 'two sides' implies a generalisation and simplification of all the events during the Cold War. Moreover, it is also necessary to point out that a homogeneous articulation of discourses was not stable and coherent within the sides. There were moments of internal conflict; for instance, an ideological divergence in the 1960s hampered the relations between the USSR and People's Republic of China. However, as I have explained, my approach develops in a constructed contextual frame in which the level of analysis is based on the discursivity of the research material. As with the setting of hegemony, it is necessary to clarify that the analysis does not attempt to explain a specific event in this period or provide a historical analysis or explanations during this time. My interest is the context of a social space with a binary configuration in which two sides try to occupy the centre.

7.2 *We are all here on behalf of world peace...aren't we?*

This first part addresses the basic binary of 'us against them'. Through the following pieces, I will highlight the most relevant aspects when antagonism is expressed in the complete negation of the other.

The first case is related to the expansion of nuclear armament stockpiles and the efforts to control it in the 1950s. The historical context included events such as the Korean War and Joseph Stalin's death in 1953. That same year, Dwight Eisenhower (US president 1954-1961) gave two significant speeches. One is the 'Chance for Peace', which was delivered to a domestic audience; in this speech¹³⁹, a pessimistic scenario is depicted because the government of the Soviet Union,

The Soviet government held a vastly different vision of the future. In the world of its design, security was to be found, not in mutual trust and mutual aid but in force: huge armies, subversion, rule of neighbour nations. The goal was power superiority at all cost. Security was to be sought by denying it to all others. The result has been tragic for the world and, for the Soviet Union

The most significant point is when Eisenhower recognized that the world was divided,¹⁴⁰

The nations of the world divided to follow two distinct roads. The United States and our valued friends, the other free nations, chose one road. The leaders of the Soviet Union chose another. The way chosen by the United States was plainly marked by a few clear precepts, which govern its conduct in world affairs

These two brief extracts from the speech contain a rich articulation for my analytical concern. The starting point is to highlight the declaration of division in the world with the implication that a normative positioning was involved. This mobilises an essentialist duality when normativity appears as deeply related to both of the identities mentioned. It implies that the nature and capacities of the actors labelled as the 'leaders' of each side were opposing. According to this statement, the chance for peace was only possible thanks to the U.S.'s efforts to control and prevent atomic war. Under this articulation, the conditions of the possibility of peace, future, and security were dependant on what

¹³⁹ For the speech, see: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9819#axzz2iR459CFj>
Accessed: 8.12.2017.

¹⁴⁰ This was not the first time this idea was expressed. For instance, Joseph Stalin made a reference of the factual division of communism and capitalism sides in February 1946. One month later of Stalin's remark, the Winston Churchill's speech, generally known as the 'Iron Curtain', epitomised the division (Krakovsky, 2012: 214-6).

the U.S. could do against the Soviet menace. This is a clear example of investing meaning and articulating it to the identity and accounts of social objectivity of one actor. Generally speaking, the division of the world had ‘free nations’ versus other, generally recognised as ‘totalitarian states’. The term ‘imperialist’ was a shared adjective that both sides used to denounce the intromission of the other in other countries. As noted in the quotation, peace is articulated with freedom, and both issues are claimed in this speech.

The second speech¹⁴¹ from Eisenhower was the ‘Atoms for Peace Speech’, which was delivered at the United Nations. The speech advocated for the regulation and expansion of atomic resources as a foundation for development. The speech aimed to link the use of nuclear energy in civilian issues beyond the military sphere. The critical situation was that the Soviet Union had developed the capacity of nuclear armament at that time, and nuclear arsenals were on the rise. The possibility of nuclear confrontation was by far the most dangerous situation during the Cold War. This situation prompted the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1956. The visual record of these events appears in the following image.



(1)

¹⁴¹ In general terms, the content of the speech includes the capacity of the US and allies to develop the arsenal of these weapons and the situations in which these could be used. The tone in reference with the Soviet Union was conciliatory and it recognised the spirit of cooperation for establishing controls and the Atomic Agency. For the speech see: <https://www.iaea.org/about/history/atoms-for-peace-speech>. Accessed:8.11.2017.

This image is from the American military company General Dynamics, which published a series of posters¹⁴² in different languages addressing the countries that had the capacity to use atomic energy in the civilian sphere (Heller, 2004: 437). This is one of the pieces of this series that combines contrasting elements of technological (military) developments with peace. The two pictorial elements that represent ‘hydrodynamics’ (written above the greenish area) are a nautilus shell and a nuclear submarine emerging from it. The latter is the representation of the first atomic submarine, Nautilus, as inspired by Julio Verne’s novel. The background in gradated grey contrasts with the white nautilus shell that holds the figure of the world (in blue) at its core. The text at the top reads, in French, as “l’atome au service de la paix” (atoms for peace). The rhetorical organisation and compositional interpretation indicate the relation of elements in contradiction. In all the posters in the series from General Dynamics, the benefits of atomic energy were connected with productive aspects rather with the destructive power of this type of energy. The pictorial elements appeal to create a level of authority by showing a normative and positive aspect of this technological development. In this image, the perception of destruction associated with this type of energy is overturned, and the message articulates peace with this type of energy and technology.

The references to Eisenhower’s speeches and the poster are a good starting point to develop the analysis. First, they declare that the world was divided, and that one side represented a threat for security and the acts of this country were based on “force and rule of neighbour nations”. The remarkable point is to notice the logics from which antagonism develops. The obvious issue is the contradictions in terms of the ‘ideology’ of both parts, but my analysis intends to look beyond this aspect. In terms of discourse, the relevant matter is to find those barriers or markers of what is included and excluded, and to follow the manoeuvres to make the distinction. In this case, the first point to notice is that there is a proclamation based on a duality that is constitutive of each side. Both identities develop from the logic of irreconcilable ends in conflict. In this way, one side claims a privileged position according to the normative argument displayed in the discourse. From this point of view, the discourse claims that ‘peace and freedom’ belong to this actor and its allies. In addition, the discourse mentions ‘visions of the future’ in the sense that the responsibility of acting in certain way is again framed in opposed dualities. The image “atoms for peace” is a helpful example to show how a discourse expands and the identity of the actor obtains a legitimate position. While a private company published the poster, the atomic agenda was in direct relation to the US

¹⁴² The posters were designed by the Swiss artist Erik Nitsche in 1955.

government.¹⁴³ The significant point is to see the articulation of peace with this ‘technological advance’¹⁴⁴ Peace achieves a new dimension due to the inclusion of this signifier in the use of nuclear energy in the ‘civilian’ sphere. In this example, the investment of meaning implies hegemonic aims, and identity and antagonism develop in a process of the inclusion/exclusion of meaning.

Moving on to the other side of the bipolar scenario, the image below portrays the opposing perspective. In this image, which was published in the Soviet Union (circa 1953-54), the main elements mobilise peace under a collective identity.



(2)

The focal point is a multi-ethnic chain that shows their unity while surrounding the world. The solemn facial expression contrasts with the intended mood of celebration in the image. The two words in red are in Russian and mean “Peace!” (on the left) and “friendship!”. The stance of the persons denotes a protective attitude as defenders of the world. The ethnical diversity and gender parity¹⁴⁵ of the figures signify the representativeness of the image. The other notable visual element is the use of colour to highlight identity. Considering the spatial organisation and rhetorical composition of the image, the central position of the USSR on the map makes it the epicentre of peace. The shape of the country, and the red tint, draw viewers’ attention in reference

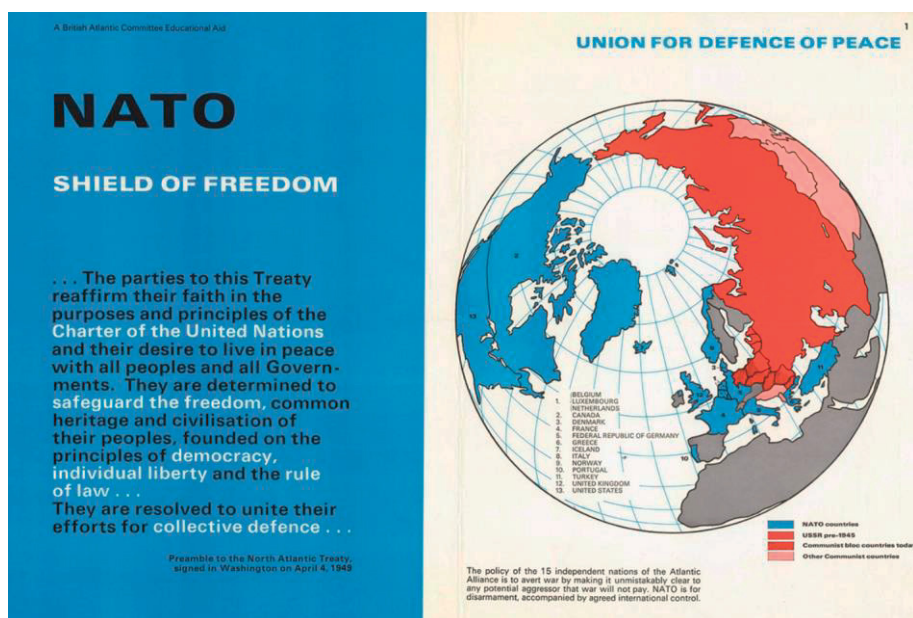
¹⁴³ Even the point was to stress the technological progress and its pacific implementation, the situation became contradictory when the main great powers equipped this type of submarines with ballistic missiles carrying nuclear heads.

¹⁴⁴ There is a similar example linking peace to nuclear energy with the poster of the International Atomic Energy Agency (Image 15, p. 146).

¹⁴⁵ From my perspective, the person in the right corner may represent a female figure.

to the rest of the geographical elements. The positioning of the world with the Soviet Union at the centre declares a vision of the world. This vision is developed when the national aspect connects with a collective identity worldwide and both are determined by a specific reference: ‘the red identity’. In this account of social objectivity, this is the way to articulate peace with the particular and collective identity depicted.

The following image is one of the most interesting examples of identity and articulation that I found for this analysis. Unlike the Soviet poster in which the red colour defined a national identity in positive terms, from the next actor's perspective, this colour is linked to a menace. This image (by the British Atlantic Committee (BAC), 1965) is an example of a series of posters that were considered as ‘educational aids’ and appeared in different NATO publications in the 1960s.¹⁴⁶ The image has two sides; in each, there are remarkable points for my analysis.



(3)

The text on the left is taken from the Preamble of the NATO Treaty. As the ellipses indicate, some text is missing after “the rule of law” and “collective defence” sentences.¹⁴⁷ In the first case, the sentence omitted reads as, “They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area”. The other words that are missing

¹⁴⁶ These posters were used as ‘pieces of information’.

¹⁴⁷ http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm Accessed: 27.11.2017.

close the Preamble text read as, “and for the preservation of peace”. The use of colours is an interesting strategy. Blue is in the left background; it works as the institutional colour¹⁴⁸ and is also used to distinguish its members on the map.¹⁴⁹ The white letters are used to highlight specific words considered as crucial for the whole message: “Shield of Freedom”, “Charter of the United Nations”, “freedom”, “democracy”, “individual liberty”, “rule of law” and “collective defence”. From a discursive perspective, this is the perfect example of articulation. All these notions stand out in the overall message and can be regarded as nodal points. This also shows the relational aspect addressed in discourse theory. Specifically, the meaning fixed to them is the particularised version (NATO) that is presented as universal. The complementing signifiers are, for instance, “common heritage and civilisation”.

On the right side, the compositional interpretation of the spatial organisation pinpoints how the world looked like at this historic juncture. The geographical elements are an important focal point because the angle of the globe lets the viewer see the ideological and political frontiers dividing the world. This can be regarded as bipolar hegemony in which the contending sides converge on a single frontier (Palonen, 2009). Certainly, each side articulates its own version of peace, but the situation of different actors making their interest in peace equivalent was not previously experienced. Thus, I consider that it is possible to characterise and explain this division as bipolar hegemony. This is because of the necessary opposition of both sides related them. In this case, defending peace and achieving security are the sources of dispute and connection. The territorial immensity of the USSR and the “communist bloc” evokes a menacing aspect with its colouring.¹⁵⁰ The rest of the world appears as a ‘grey zone’ without much political transcendence; some parts are even omitted (e.g. Central and South America). The footnote at the bottom of the piece reads as follows,

The policy of the 15 independent nations of the Atlantic Alliance is to avert war by making it unmistakably clear to any potential aggressor that war will not pay. NATO is for disarmament, accompanied by agreed international control

The names of the 15 members (at that time) are placed within the figure of the globe on the side of the Atlantic Ocean. In summary, this piece has all the topics that this dissertation addresses. The left part, inclusive of fragments of the North Atlantic Treaty,

¹⁴⁸ Nowadays the colour has a darker tone as in the NATO's flag.

¹⁴⁹ http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/photos_122038.htm Accessed: 27.11.2017.

¹⁵⁰ The explanation of the colours at the right-down corner differentiate with distinct red hue the USSR before the WWII, the formation of “Communist bloc” after the war, and China and Mongolia are acknowledged in a lighter tone.

shows the grounds and elements that form a vision of social objectivity. The Charter of the United Nations and the legitimacy that this represents are the cornerstone from which the rest of elements (aims and values) develop. A teleological dimension is added with the statement that the parties to this Treaty “are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples”. The rest of signifiers in white letters become the pillars of the visions expressed. The articulation of the discourse proceeds with the inclusion of “democracy, individual liberty and rule of law”. Through this movement, it affects the identity of these signifiers.

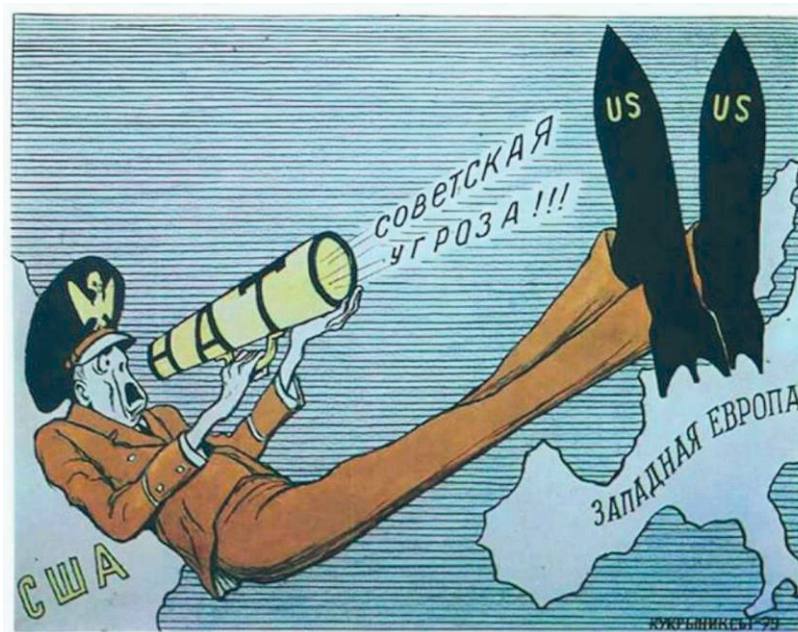
Consequently, this organisation claims to be a union for “defence of peace” and a “shield of freedom”. Framing the organisation in this way, the discourse assumes that freedom does not exist outside the shield; therefore, the ones outside of the shield are a threat to freedom. The map is a radiography of a social field divided into two sides with the chains of equivalence well defined. The links of the chain are the countries of the blue and red sides. This geopolitical division is similar to the discursive articulation behind the contemporary so-called ‘War on Terror’ (Nabers, 2015). Eventually, it can be argued that the countries and part of the world in grey are those heterogeneous elements that did not find representativeness in the social configuration available at that point. This image also has inherent features of productivity and authority because of the status of the actor (producer) but, more significantly, the moral duty at stake.

The colouring of the map resonates with the previous two images as the world is presented in two poles as Eisenhower’s speech. However, from this perspective, the ‘redness’ of the USSR is highlighted as a dangerous enemy. One interesting point is that in the 1960s, both poles had internal crises. This piece was published in 1965; one year later, France withdrew from the military structure¹⁵¹ of the Alliance, alleging dominant US participation. The Sino-Soviet Split started in the late 1950s and deepened during the years that followed. I mention these issues to clarify the contingent aspect of not only the discourse but also of the practices and identities within the social. On the other hand, when a discourse always refers to the adversary, the identity mobilised appeal to an undisputed union and legitimacy to claim what peace is. Both sides make the same claim over the same issues by deploying a foundational logic of full transcendence.

The following two images exemplify the ways legitimacy is disputed through the fixation of meaning. The satiric depiction of the antagonist-other was a recurrent feature in the visual material in this divided context. As I explained in Chapter 4, in the selection of the images, I found the drawings and illustrations more interesting than the real photos because in the former, the topics depicted were developed through a richer

¹⁵¹ It re-joined to this structure in 2009.

composition of discursive elements. Certain aspects of the ‘enemy’ were exaggerated, while the self-representation involved exceptionality and integrity. The next image shows a caricature referring to transatlantic relations that frame the US’s actions in Europe as interventionist. This piece belongs to the group of graphic artists *Kukryniksy*¹⁵² published in 1979. A person wearing a US Army uniform shouts through a loudspeaker (with NATO’s name), in Russian (as all the text in the image), “*Soviet menace!!!*” The names ‘U.S.A.’ and ‘Western Europe’ are written on the land depicted. The two bombs representing the feet emphasise the military presence of the US and frame it as an outsider intervening in European affairs through NATO.



(4)

In this way, all the rhetorical elements of this image resonate with the idea of ‘American imperialism’ and the interventionist character regarded to this situation. This military interventionism is framed as a threat to the peaceful coexistence and identity of the ‘West Europeans’. The image presents NATO, and the US’ military interests as a factor of instability that is external to the European context.

¹⁵² The works of this group were widely known in a period from 1920’s until 1980’s. For more information and a gallery of the works, see: <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/exhibitions/TASS/Kukryniksy> Accessed: 19.01.2018.

The poster below (published in Poland circa 1983) follows the line of stressing the military character of this organisation. The title at the bottom reads in Polish language, *NATO to destroy earth*.



(5)

The focal point goes with the overemphasis of the size of the elements. Visually, the impression works by the disproportional use or the amount of armament linked to NATO. The rhetorical organisation of the image underlines the normative aspect of affecting world peace. The reference to the ‘antagonist-other’ appears on one of bombs with the white military insignia of the US army. As seen in the preceding images, the piece puts forward the logic that a particular actor is a threat for the universal good. This logic has the defender/aggressor binary based on a normative hierarchy. Despite the few pictorial elements used, this image brings the universal/particular perspective with the bombs representing the particular (NATO’s interests) against the universal (the rest of the world).

Turning back to the ‘other side’, one of the most notorious organisations publishing and circulating visual material in the 1950’s was the famous French group *Paix et Liberté* (Peace and Freedom). Commonly identified as an ‘anti-communist’ group, *Paix et Liberté* published posters and illustrations targeting specifically the USSR government and the French Communist party. I will present three posters of this organisation in the analysis. The next two exemplify the character of the works promoted by this group and, as previous examples, the geographical representation and chromatic composition distinguish the duality of us/them. This first image is *Où est le camp de la paix?* (Where are the peace camps?), published in 1954. The rhetoric question in the title tries to

emphasise the massive difference in the amount of military divisions deployed in the European Continent.



(6)

The focal point is the numbers pointing the difference and the title of the piece at the bottom. The context of this piece was that each side claimed to be in favour of the continental peace while the other side was increasing its military capabilities. The body language of the two men figures has a contrasting attitude. The side supported by *Paix et Liberté* is presented as the ‘free Europe’ while implying that in the ‘Oriental block’ this situation was inexistent. In this side of the ‘battlefield’, freedom can be regarded as a nodal point due to the importance given in the discourse and identity. It is presented as the main source of legitimacy and thus as an undisputed feature of all the actors involved.

The following poster¹⁵³, also published by *Paix et Liberté* (circa 1950), shows this focal point: a young girl¹⁵⁴ standing on the Western side of Europe holding an umbrella adorned with many flags from the countries of this side of the continent. The ground looks like a greenish meadow showing signs of blooming. However, the ‘red menace’, symbolised by the sickle and the hammer, is about to fall from a dark cloud in the sky. Part of what could be considered as ‘rain’ seems to pour down into the Eastern side of

¹⁵³ It is worth mentioning that on NATO’s official website, some of the works by *Paix et Liberté* are presented along with other posters that promote the activities of this organisation. To see the gallery: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/photos_121999.htm Accessed: 16.1.2018.

¹⁵⁴ The girl may represent the Greek goddess Europe.

the continent, as the colour of the ground has a darker shade in comparison to the rest of the green area. This difference of colour may hint at the Soviet Union's influence zone. The notion of unity, represented as an umbrella and a map without any political frontier, is mobilised in reference to the one considered and characterised as a threat.



(7)

The flags in the umbrella are a perfect example of a chain of equivalence of different elements (the countries characterised with the flags) that are connected because the antagonist threatens their existence. Discursively, union becomes the main foundation, and the horizon of the possibilities of these different elements depends on permanently having this foundation. The text from Italian reads, “Europe united a guarantee of peace”. The image evokes a young and united European continent without borders. Still, some parts of Europe are not included. This suggests that only the Western part represents the whole. The rhetorical organisation and compositional arrangement are based on a simple dichotomy of two sides in contention with one representing all the positive aspects. Moreover, in this representation, the future of young Europe is jeopardised due to the element of antagonism, as suggested with the hammer and the

sickle. These images clarify the argument based on poststructuralist insights about the lack and negativity in any form of identification. Those excluded and not represented are the ones ‘blocking’ the full realisation of the ones promoting the identity of ‘Europe united’.

The next image is the last of this section and works as a transitional example to continue with the next section. I chose it because it combines the two thematic issues that guide this scenario. In this one, the logic, again, is that the identities presented are based on neutrality and legitimacy. These features convey an underlying logic of fulfilment or a final foundation. This image displays not only a national identity but also a ‘communist identity’ in a very colourful and heavily adorned presentation. The title of the piece is “The Sino-Soviet Alliance for Friendship and Mutual Assistance Promotes Enduring World Peace” (circa 1950, text at the top is presumably in simplified Chinese).



(8)

This poster celebrates the Treaty of Peace, Security and Friendship between the USSR and PRC in 1950. The figures of Joseph Stalin and Mao Tse-tung are the notorious focal points, and they appear surrounded by a mix of bi-national folklore with buildings and dancers representing each country. The two flags behind the leaders reinforce the identities and brotherhood displayed. The dove of peace has a special place in the whole piece: It appears in a painting ornamented with dozens of flowers and fruits. Some other doves fly on both sides, standing for each country as a sign that peace and cooperation reigns between the parts. These two countries honour the dove in their effort to promote “enduring world peace”, as the title of the image declares.

Beyond the blatant personality cult displayed in this image, I included these last two pictures to show the articulation of peace with a national identity. Yet, in the case, the national identities are also positioned as ‘guardians’ of world peace. In this way, the image appeals to another level of actorness with the nation state as a reference. Once more, the signifier peace is claimed and ‘filled’ with meaning and, thus, with an identity. The rhetorical composition uses the figure of the dove to bring the signifier ‘peace’ into this articulation. The national identities displayed are articulated with their particular version of peace. I noted the same logic in the NATO poster with the map in blue and red.

This is the basic logocentric standpoint of claiming a privileged position. Peace, or any other notion as unity or freedom, is internalised, negating these notions to ‘the Other’. Claiming this position implies that the social field and rest of the elements fall into a hierarchical arrangement. As I mentioned with the deconstructive reading, many of the binaries are explicit in some images. In these, the hierarchies are well defined. Furthermore, in other images, specifically the ones presenting only one side of ‘peace’, the hierarchy is hidden. In these images, the hegemonic stance is developed through concealing the other versions. This can be theorised following the poststructuralist argument that the negation is present even if it is absent. For instance, in the last image, the negation is any element that exists outside of the ‘communist’ identity.

Concerning the visuals, the intertextual dimension of all these images can be seen in the recurrent use of geographical references, in the chromatic features to denote political identification or threats, and in the sharp division of the social space. The point of discursivity has clarified that the notion of unity underpins the accounts of social objectivity. In this case, unity is a matter of survival due to the closed context of antagonism. The conditions of possibility of the actors depicted but also of peace, as an abstract idea and political goal, are heavily attached to the notion of unity. I will return to all of the concluding remarks of this section at the end of chapter.

7.3 Appropriating the symbol: *the dove is white; no! It is red!* *Who cares...the dove is mine!*

As stated in the title, the representation of the dove is the main reference to follow the discursive dynamics that converge under one signifier. In this way, I will consider peace as a floating signifier to examine the discursivity featured in the pieces for analysis. As explained in the third chapter, the term ‘floating signifier’ refers to the dispute over the identity and meaning invested in a specific signifier. All the images selected for this

section are examples of how different actors appeal to the symbolisation of the dove in their discourse, displaying an undisputed logic of neutrality and legitimacy.

The first two images are related to a movement calling for the complete ban on nuclear weapons¹⁵⁵ known as the *Stockholm Appeal*. Scientist Frédéric Joliot-Curie promoted this movement in 1950. Joliot-Curie had close links with the French Communist Party and this situation meant the support of different European socialist countries. One organisation that supported the Stockholm Appeal was the World Peace Council¹⁵⁶ (WPC, founded in 1949-50). The origin of the WPC is linked to a congress organised by the governments of the USSR and Poland in 1948. The next two images (both are poster-sheet to collect signatures published in Poland) illustrate the WPC's support to the Stockholm Appeal.



(9)



(10)

The piece on the left (1990) has the header “To move forward rapidly towards a new international economic order”. “Stop the arms race”. The main elements depicted are the inseparable dove and olive branch, conforming a hand and pen, making the symbolism to gain support. The one on the right (1976) reads on the header: "To make detente irreversible -- Stop the arms race/ Sign the new Stockholm Appeal”-

¹⁵⁵ See: <http://www.wpc-in.org/statements/65th-anniversary-stockholm%E2%80%99s-appeal> Accessed: 11.09.2018.

¹⁵⁶ This organisation is still active nowadays. On their website, this organisation stands for “an anti-imperialist, democratic, independent and non-aligned international movement of mass action” <http://www.wpc-in.org/about-wpc> Accessed: 11.02.2018.

Other version of the same image¹⁵⁷ includes the text,

To make detente irreversible -- Stop the arms race/ to move forward rapidly towards a New international economic order¹⁵⁸ -- stop the arms race/ to defend peace and build a new world -- stop the arms race/ together for banning all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction/ together for general and complete disarmament!/ together for the calling without delay of the United Nations World disarmament conference.

The initial point to highlight is the logic of neutrality underpinning the composition of the pieces. The petition of controlling armament is presented to transcend any political ideology. The use of the dove and olive branch appeals to a universal value that is a shared goal of any group regardless their political affiliation. The message in these two images is reinforced because a precise action is proposed to contribute to world peace. The actors through the discursive articulation take a 'neutral' stance that is grounded with the mobilisation of such as major ideal as peace. However, calling for a "New International Economic Order", necessarily affects the identity and meaning of peace in this discourse. This order refers to the "Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order" adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1974. The Declaration aimed for,

equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest and cooperation among all States, irrespective of their economic and social systems

As noted by discourse theory, the articulation of a chain of signifiers conveys that these elements have a situated identity within the discourse. Hence, the pretended neutrality by this type of articulation and visual representation cannot achieve complete presence and identification. In this case is clear the way peace is aligned with other signifiers like 'new economic order' that at the same time affect the meaning of 'common interest and cooperation'.

Moving to other visions of the world, the next two images were published in the People's Republic of China at different historic junctures. Even both share some features, each one offers interesting points of identity formation.

¹⁵⁷ The image with the text referred was not possible to edit and include. See: <http://collections.museumca.org/?q=collection-item/2010541372> Accessed: 07.12.2017.

¹⁵⁸ For the text and declaration, see: <http://www.un-documents.net/s6r3201.htm> Accessed: 13.02.2018.

This following statement¹⁵⁹ of Mao Zedong (1954) is the background of the images,

Our general task is to unite the whole people and win the support of all our friends abroad in the struggle to build a great socialist country, defend world peace and advance the cause of human progress

The context of this declaration was an official agreement between China and India in which the “Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence”¹⁶⁰ were included as norms and guidelines of foreign policy. In the first image (1959), the main elements are the men standing side by side with their sight aimed at the horizon.



(11)

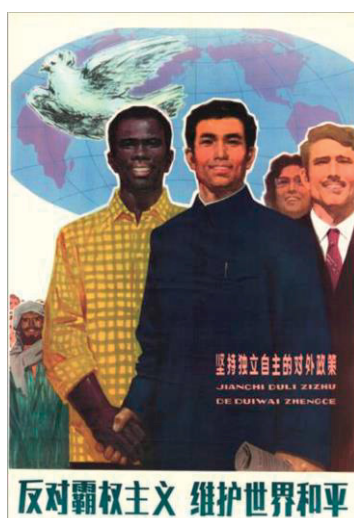
¹⁵⁹ This statement is taken from an informative website of China
<http://en.people.cn/92824/92845/92870/6441506.html#> Accessed: 13.02.2018.

¹⁶⁰ These are: respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence. This information is directly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China. See:

http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18053.shtml
Accessed: 14.02.2018.

I consider that the focal point is shared with the background of the giant dove. The rhetorical composition indicates that the trio stands for the representation of unity and ethnical diversity. Moreover, it is a ‘reduced’ version of the whole community that it aims to represent, and it lacks gender equality. The hint of ‘togetherness’ is the hand over the shoulder of the man resembling the Chinese population. The dove of peace with the olive branch serves as a strong colourful contrast to the red background. As part of the background (bottom left corner), many banners have the word ‘peace’ written on them in different languages. This multi-national collage complements the inclusive character of the image. The text reads (presumably from simplified Chinese and its Romanisation), “People from all over the world, unite and protect peace!” As in other images, the chromatic feature distinguishes some elements, and, therefore, their identity. Considering the discursive dynamics, the dove, working as a universal symbol, finds a particular identity under the ‘red sky’ of the scene. Universality is claimed on behalf of the protection of peace in a worldwide coalition. Another interesting feature is the clothes of the three men depicted. Their attire resembles a working-class stratum.

The next image was published almost 25 years later (in 1983) and includes the same elements and logic. The title and text read as, “Oppose hegemonism, uphold world peace, (written at the bottom) maintain a foreign policy of independence and own initiative”. Even the human figures appear as superimposed or attached separately.



(12)

The hint of togetherness is the handshake between the two persons at the centre. In this image, the level of inclusiveness is increased with the inclusion of one woman and a bearded man with a turban on the left corner. The focal point is the persons, mostly

the ones at the centre, and the compositional issue brings the point of social difference. The image tries to cover a wider range of different social identities as a chain of difference, but all stand together ‘opposing hegemonism’. This expression refers to the text on the right side, which reads, “Maintain a foreign policy of independence and own initiative” (presumably from simplified Chinese and its Romanisation). This statement follows the principles mentioned before and relates to the idea of hegemonism. In Mao Zedong’s period, this idea referred to halting the possibility of capitalist hegemony, while in the late 1970s with Den Xiaoping, hegemonism meant avoiding unipolarity at the international level.

There are some significant differences in the way the collective identity is promoted and in the identity of the dove. In the first one, the red sky mobilises and links three identities, a dual communist-nationalist and one ‘internationalist’ (by the ethnical diversity); in the second image, the first two are dropped and the more inclusive and universal perspective is highlighted. The ‘neutrality’ of the colours in this one (if compared with the previous one) tries to avoid a layer of the particular identity (nationalism and ideological affiliation) and also attempts to depict a more comprehensive identity (international community) without political divisions. The dove covering the majority of Asia and Europe is one of Pablo Picasso’s paintings depicting the dove of peace.¹⁶¹ The dove was used in the promotion of the *Second World Congress of the Defenders of Peace* (1950). Discursively, this image illustrates the universal-particular paradox in which a particular stance (Chinese leadership) is presented as a universal representation.

The following three images close this second part and whole analysis. The content shows the satirical use of discursive elements associated with the thematic figure of the dove. The images address the authoritarian representations of Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union’s influence on and actions in other countries. The poster above is from *Paix et Liberté* (1951); it presents sardonic views of the communist counterpart. The same dove that was flying free in the previous image now appears leashed and owned. As I previously mentioned, *Paix et Liberté* was an open anti-communist group, and their actions opposed the Stockholm Appeal and the World Peace Council. This is the reason that the dove¹⁶² was used in a satirical way in the various posters of this anti-communist group.

¹⁶¹ The original is from 1949. See: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/picasso-dove-p11366> Accessed: 15.02.2018.

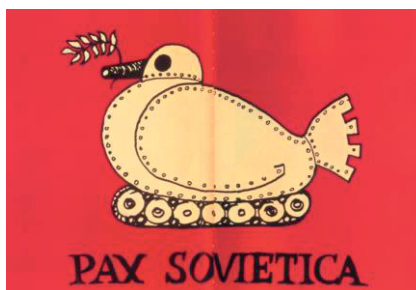
¹⁶² This was a counter reaction of Picasso’s dove in the World Peace Congress mentioned before.



(13)

The caricature depicts Stalin wearing a military uniform and holding a banner in his right hand that says “Peace” in French. Jo-Jo refers to a nickname used for Joseph, and la colombe means ‘dove in’ French. Stalin’s ‘communist identity’ is revealed as a tattoo of the sickle and hammer on his left forearm and the red star on his shirt.¹⁶³ The dove is victimised and appears captive under the dominion of Stalin’s figure; the body language of Stalin is casual and relaxed but ready to use the medieval weapon known as the ‘morning star’.

Similarly, the next piece replicates the famous image “La Colombe qui Fait Boom” by *Paix et Liberté*. Both versions share the same idea of presenting the dove as a Soviet tank. The image below aims to criticise what was considered the double discourse and the Soviet Union’s intervention in Poland. The immediate context of the publication was the government’s declaration of martial law due to the mobilisations the workers union *Solidarność* (Solidarity) organised in 1982.



(14)

¹⁶³ This shirt with the horizontal stripes is known as *marinière*, Picasso used to wear this kind of shirts. For instance, see: <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20160309-the-ultimate-symbol-of-french-cool>. Accessed: 22.02.2018.

'Pax Sovietica' (Soviet Peace in Latin) presents the idea of 'Pax Romana' and refers to a period of stability within the dominions of a leading political force. The composition of the elements and the rhetorical reference point out the chromatic issue that is used to underline ideological representativeness that reinforces the criticism of the suggested actor. The piece links the national context (Polish politics) with a regional perspective (Soviet influence in Eastern Europe). Additionally, it denounces military intervention under peaceful actions.

The same line of 'falseness and deception' is featured in the last image (circa 1950, USSR) closing this second part. This denounces the U.S. military activities that were justified under peace aims. The text on the right corner reads (from Russian): "Washington's "Dove" (letters in yellow). Even though they mask it skilfully, they cannot hide the rotten inside". In addition, the phrase "Peace loving phrases" is written on the upper part of the dove.



(15)

The rhetorical organisation of the image continues with the basic idea of hypocritical actions in the name of world peace. All the elements depicted interact, and the focal point is the three men that are 'dressing up' a bomb labelled 'US' (United States). Two of them wear military uniforms, and the third, who is holding the dove's upper body, wears 'gangster-style' clothes and has a gun in his right pocket. They are identified as members of the military or security forces of this country with the acronym 'US' on the hat of the one holding the upper part and on the jacket of the one holding the feathers.

These last pieces show aspects that are part of the social and political struggles but that are barely considered for analysis. The caricatures and satire are expressions in

which the presence of the other is firmly negated. Through the discursive perspective, the aim is to consider that in these expressions, the struggle is inherent. Moreover, this way of depicting the other underlines the contradictions and failures that any identity has. These images are examples of the politics of representation and the power dynamics involved, not only in these kinds of depictions but also in the whole elements involved in the articulation of an account of social objectivity.

7.4 Conclusion: inside and outside of antagonism

Applying the poststructuralist theorisation of discourse and identity, the analysis exhibited the configuration based on the logic of equivalence and the conformation of discursive borders in a context of antagonism. The division of the social field and the dispute over a specific topic provided different perspectives about the articulation of discourse and issues of identity regarding two elements standing in strong opposition. I argued that the discursive borders are crucial to see the dispute. Therefore, my focus was on the relation of what establishes the inside and outside and the respective binaries that develop in this setting.

In line with the literature mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the analysis in this setting deconstructed the calls of a legitimate-self versus the negation of the other. In other words, all the pieces show the indivisible relation of hegemony and antagonism. The visual representations mostly relied on dichotomies where the complexities of the social are 'simplified' with discourses of the self and the enemy. Following the Derridean sense of questioning logocentrism and metaphysics (Marchart, 2007: 15-8), there is not only an ontic level in which world peace is expected to occur as a result of certain actions (disarmament or peacekeeping) but also a full ontological presentation of 'peace'. The visual representations show the possibility of being (as triumphant) or not being (affected by armament), and it achieves a specific grounding due to assigning a colour, and linking it to a chain of signifiers and, thus, a particular identity within the articulation. Considering the deconstructive reading that I followed, this exposed the attempts to define 'presence' (representation) and 'being'.

In the images and text presented, peace is defined and characterised with shape and colour. However, as argued by different scholars (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, Shapiro, 1988) the point is to problematise the intended neutrality of these representations considering the political dimension of meaning and representation. In this context, a 'neutral being' is a political being. I stated that when two opposite sides contend for the achievement of a dominant position, a double process of sedimentation runs in parallel.

This is because, as with any account of social objectivity, there is an immanent logic of fulfilment. In consequence, peace, or any other signifier, is grounded in both sides, but it is also heavily disputed. The first point on which to comment is the formation of identity in a negative context. As poststructuralist accounts on identity formation acknowledge, the lack or negativity is constitutive, and it is always manifested in the other. Many of the images presented reflected this theoretical argument and show two relevant aspects of the discursive construction of identity. Some do not include or mention the antagonist, while in others it is the main reference in the image.

For instance, in the cases of “Peace! and friendship!” and “Oppose hegemonism, uphold world peace”, the collective identity displayed does not stand against a visible other negating this identity. The images appeal to an identification on the personal level that evolves into a worldwide community, and they include similar visual elements, such as many images of the UN. This level of identity supports the idea of ethnic diversity sharing a common space. In this way, the message avoids sources of tension (nationalism or political ideologies). These two images exemplify the way a vision of social objectivity establishes its particularity as a neutral and legitimate demand. The common identity represented in these images shows the logic of an identity that has achieved a full dimension. The images referred to are an example of logocentrism that makes presence a given state in which the political aspect is no longer required.

The neutrality and particularity previously mentioned become a more ‘problematic’ stance in the image “the Sino-Soviet alliance”. This is because one method of identification (national identity) is the main element of the message. The strong layer of nationalism displayed in this image is a marker that outside of the socio-political space, the ‘Others’ entails a source of threat. This image shows how peace (or any other notion) can be articulated to nationalist imaginaries. As in other analyses of antagonism and nationalism (Carpentier, 2008), the division of the field is based on a hierarchical arrangement with a normative dimension. With this image, it is also possible to refer to the contradictions within any aspiration of fullness in the discourse and identity of any socio-political project or actor. Even these two countries hold a close relation as the image portrays, the Sino-Soviet alliance had a major division some years after this image was published. This situation reflects the post-foundational stance of the contingencies that affect any identity or vision of objectivity.

The other aspect of identity construction was noticed in the images in which only the negative side of the other is openly highlighted, such as “Jo-Jo la Colombe”, “NATO to destroy earth” and “Washington’s ‘Dove’”. These examples show the outside that determines the being of the inside. In other words, the satirical views or demonizations of the antagonist (in these cases Stalin, NATO and the U.S. respectively)

contain all the attributes that are considered external to self-identity. In all of these cases, I consider that the most significant issue the discursive frame exposes is the understanding of the logics of neutrality and legitimacy grounding the vision of both sides of the field. This means that it is possible to talk about the hegemonic moves inside of antagonism. Concerning the issues of identity and the articulation of discourse, the analysis revealed the movements through which the actor tries to achieve legitimacy (discursive level) and the assumption of neutrality is present in each of the images.

In this setting of antagonism, the identity of the sides in contention is grounded in a hierarchical binary opposition that projects a line of legitimacy to all the claims made. This is already a hegemonic move in which the account of social objectivity and identity is placed as the only possible reference in the social field. It is on these grounds that, for instance, the images “Peace! and friendship! and “Oppose hegemonism, uphold world peace” are able to claim ‘peace’ as a part of them. In these examples, peace is converted as the imaginary in that the message includes the dimension of fulfilment. This dimension includes the representation of peace, as presence, that is constructed based on the logic of a completely neutral and legitimate basis. These images do not show the antagonist, and, thus, the hierarchy. However, this situation does not mean that this has faded. The other is present in its absence, as a basic poststructural thought postulates.

By reading through a deconstructive perspective, it is possible to see the hierarchies underlying the formation of identity and the ways the discourse of the actors developed. The accounts of social objectivity are reduced to the dichotomies of legitimate/illegitimate, defender/aggressor and saviour/threat; through them, the identities find their place in the hierarchical arrangement. The full dichotomy is visible when both identities are displayed together, such as with ‘NATO shield of freedom’, ‘Soviet Menace!!’, ‘Where are the peace camps?’ and ‘Europe united’. In these images, a basic defender/aggressor dynamic set the dividing lines where the identities are positioned normatively. In consequence, this hierarchical arrangement affects the rest of elements in the social field.

In other images, linking one or more situations (e.g. union, freedom or peace) with a spatial reference (Europe) develops the inside/outside duplet. The cases of “NATO’s shield of freedom” and “Europe united a guarantee of peace” demonstrate the articulation of the elements that ground an account of objectivity and the construction of a common identity that the outside permanently affects. In these two examples, discursivity indicates the paradoxes of establishing boundaries. One part of the discourse claims for a condition (unity or free world) that is universalised but that clearly implies an exclusion. The particularities of the actors’ vision are developed in reference

to what prevents them from occurring. This situation prompts a question about the condition of possibilities of the antagonist-other. One account articulates a discourse based on the self-proclamation of being the 'defenders of freedom'. This account works through a hegemonic logic that performs a dominant position naturalised via discourse. Then, the being of the other is questioned while the only choice available is a dichotomy of 'with us, or against us'. The poststructural critique in this case is that the dominant position never questions its own origin.

According to discourse theory, equivalence develops when dissimilar identities, the different nation states that became NATO members, create a new identity that refers to an antagonist. This move tries to condense meanings around two poles in opposition (Howarth, 2000: 107). In the images with the maps of the world, but mostly in "NATO's shield of freedom", the chain of equivalence is perfectly exposed and delimited by the blue/red division. This depiction clarifies the necessary opposition of each side in order to exist and work as a legitimate project. In the context of locked negativity, identity is constructed by proclaiming and stressing difference. The proclamation implies that all the normative aspects are seen as internal to the vision of social objectivity and identity. In this logic, the 'outsider' is never legitimate.

7.5 Peace as a floating and empty signifier

In the setting of hegemony, the visual representation of the dove appears as an unquestioned element. The privileged positioning of the actor makes it so that the identity of peace is accepted and shared. The 'enemy' of peace does not have name or face; therefore, the actor's legitimacy is certain. However, the analysis in this chapter revealed that the same logic of legitimacy and neutrality appears in the setting of antagonism. Both situations recreate the tension between contingency and necessity, as Laclau and Mouffe argue. The two sides are the contingent foundations that show the possibility of universalisation and particular resistance. In terms of theory, both sides represent the incomplete structures, and their articulations illustrate the dislocation and decentring of the structure (Laclau, 1990: 40). This part of the analysis shows the importance of the category of hegemony and its relation to the universal and the particular. In this way, discussing the 'emptiness of peace' or the dynamics of a 'floating signifier' requires a conceptual perspective and a methodological procedure that are separate from conventional analyses. Certainly, I do refer to thinking in terms of deconstruction and/or post-foundational terms. In other words,

as far as the structure is dislocated, the possibility of centres emerges: the response to the dislocation of the structure will be its recomposition around particular nodal points of articulation but the various antagonistic forces (ibid)

The choice to develop the chapter with a thematic context followed my observations of the many ways a wide range of actors, at different levels and in different contexts, use visual representations. The contextualisation in this setting makes the possibility to appreciate the contrasting representations of a signifier and the hierarchies involved. Peace, then, is the common demand that appears in both sides that claim to be the ones caring and promoting it. This is a basic hegemonic operation that is constituted along with the formation of a “tendentially empty signifier” (Phelan and Dahlberg, op. cit.: 20). The aspect of identity, as conceptualised in discourse theory, is particularly crucial in this case. One level is the identity of peace as a signifier and the simultaneous articulation and contestation that occur. The emptiness of peace can be seen in each attempt to fixate the meaning that each antagonist side makes. The peace under the ‘Chinese red sky’ with the “union for the defence of peace” is not the same as the one depicted in the NATO poster. Still, in both cases, there is an attempt to represent the universal. These articulations refer to the same signifier but rely on opposite visions of social objectivity. Freedom, for instance, is firmly articulated to peace. In the other Chinese poster, peace is featured to “oppose capitalist hegemony”. In these cases, the identity and content of peace differ, but, at the same time, it is a shared commonality. In this case, a single frontier and a shared demand for saving and enacting peace are present. These examples illustrate the paradox Laclau identifies between the universal and the particular.

On the other level, the dispute between the assignation of meaning and identity is what discourse theory refers to as a ‘floating signifier’. In this sense, peace is the disputed signifier that will vary every time it is used in any articulation. Returning to the conception of the political as a disruptive force in the institution of any given social space, peace becomes a contested conception open to articulation and reinterpretation due to the impossibility of any attempt to ground a final closure of meaning (Edkins, 1999: 2-6; Marchart, 2007). In other words, the articulation of peace, or any other signifier, shows the necessary but impossible task of achieving a full objectivity able to fix a definitive foundation. I previously highlighted the relation of the logics of neutrality and legitimacy with the identity of the actor and the discourse. Considering the politics of representation and Derrida’s take on presence presented in Chapter 3, it is possible to comprehend the moves to depoliticise the discursive articulation. In the attempt to show a neutral representation of peace, the rationality behind this tries to ground a legitimate claim on behalf of a particular understanding of what peace represents, how

it can be achieved, who can enforce it or who the enemy is. This move is extended with the naturalisation of meaning or ‘taken for granted’ and depoliticised representations used within the discourses.

Moreover, in this setting of antagonism, the presumption of neutrality and legitimacy is extended when the aspiration to universalise a particular position takes place. It is here that the analysis of the strategic moves behind the fixation of meaning has a relevant role. The discursive frame shows that in the setting of antagonism, both sides negate but still refer to the opposite vision to strengthen the foundational feature of their accounts of objectivity. The antagonist represents the borders of the project itself, and, thus, hegemony stands on the limits. The identity of the dove is concurrently legitimised and negated; the actor evoking it projects a *raison d'être* into the dove. It is more than a social or political aim: The discourses use and represent the dove for self-redemption. This implies the hierarchical positioning that I explained before. In terms of discourse, standing in a pedestal of ‘neutrality and legitimacy’, it is possible to accuse the antagonistic-other of corrupting this value. The move of caricaturing the enemy as a corruptor of a higher value as peace places an account of social objectivity in a level where legitimacy cannot be disputed.

7.6 Antagonism visualised in a divided world

The last issue that I want to stress for the conceptual approximation concerns visual representation and its relevance for the analysis proposed. Textuality and intertextuality are the keywords behind my analytical approach. Both aspects are complementary to address the representations, common symbols, topics and imaginaries displayed in the images. Certainly, intertextuality is more evident because of the thematic arrangement of the chapter. Nevertheless, I consider that the most noteworthy facet of the visual representation was the exposure of the discursive relation between views of the social that relate in negative terms. One aspect of all the images presented is that they are illustrations or drawings and not ‘real’ pictures. However, I consider that this is the aspect that makes these types of images more interesting. The first point is not to downplay this format in favour of a realistic depiction. The significant issue is that this format allows the producer to exaggerate and combine ideas that may not be available in real images. I remarked that the satirical images must be considered beyond their immediate mockery to see their intertextual relation to other images and their role of mobilising ideas of social and political organisation.

To address a topic such as social and political confrontation, the visualisation of antagonism provides new angles to understand the situation. The apparently unproblematic articulation of a signifier, or use of a symbol, unfolds into a chain of related but antagonist positions. The discursive dynamics indicated how the processes of appropriation and re-appropriation run along the divided social field in a context of antagonism. Visually, both contenders rely on similar features in the symbolisation and representation of peace; the only ‘small difference’ concerns who the threat and/or aggressor is. In this sense, the dove has two meaningful representations. One is as a figure that specific actors (states, military organisations), political ideologies or forms of government (labelled as “imperialist” or “totalitarian” regimes) and general issues (armament) victimise or threaten. The second representation of the dove is a victorious figure that has overcome any threat and exemplifies the desirable state of affairs in the world. This representation was also used in the UN’s discourse. In fact, there is a noticeable change because in the images related to the UN, the threat is a situation and not an actor. In the setting of antagonism, the threat has a visible face and name. The threat has a colour and a feature that defines its identity (‘red menace’, ‘imperialist’ or ‘totalitarian’). Colours become a crucial aspect of research for societal issues (Andersen, et al., 2015: 441). In this case, antagonism is visualised with a chromatic division that reinforces the borders of the contending identities.

The differentiation based on symbolism and chromatic divisions uncovers the hierarchical arrangement displayed in this conceptual setting. The issues of social difference, productivity, authority and the level of persuasion are relevant references to explain the discursive dynamics. The hierarchies work by presenting a positive aspect (freedom, multi-ethnic community, world peace, etc.) as an inherent element of the project. This baseline mobilise the hierarchical positioning of one side over the other. Social difference is based on the hierarchy of two confronted accounts of normative visions that legitimise the discourse. Achieving a dominant position vis-à-vis the antagonist implies that the discourse displays a level of authority (legitimacy) linked to the level of persuasion.

In the cases presented in this setting, some examples included outstanding cases of articulating notions such as ‘imperialism’, ‘freedom’ and ‘individual liberty’. The examples of the World Peace Council (WPC) advocating for a “new world economic order”, Eisenhower’s speeches declaring a division of the world and linking nuclear power with peace and development, and NATO’s map are clear examples of how a discursive articulation tries to suture as many signifiers as possible and create a dominant view and increase the level of persuasion. In the cases of “Atoms for Peace”, the “Sino-Soviet alliance” and “Oppose hegemonism”, it is possible to appreciate the articulation

of peace promoting a technological advance, a multi-ethnic community and a national identity.

In this way, claiming to 'defend peace' and being a 'shield of freedom' have a normative advantage that is taken from the adversary. This advantage is related to the persuasion that the images try to convey. The rhetorical organisation that appears in all the pieces for analysis is that the space had a dichotomy of peace/war. That is to say, the discourse included a historical script of 'peace is on our side and the other is the threat'. The figure of 'saviours of the world' can be regarded as the underlying narrative in this scenario. World peace as an aim and condition of possibility was on the 'wire' of being corrupted or saved by each side.

In this sense, the visual representation of 'space' (social and geographical) has remarkable examples. The spatial references appear in seven of the images presented. In two of them, "Peace! and friendship!" and "Oppose hegemonism", the world appears unified and pacified, while in the rest, division is the rhetorical reference. In the images "Europe united a guarantee of peace", "NATO to destroy the earth" or "Where are the peace camps?", for instance, the aspects of productivity, authority and the level of persuasion have a visual impact because of their compositional interpretation. In the first case, a borderless land and a young girl have a prosperous future only if united against the red menace coming from the East. In the other posters, the productivity of the discourse is reinforced because it points to the territorial situation of the world. While showing the sharp division of the space, the presence and 'dangerous nature' of the other is exaggerated to reinforce the level of persuasion of the discourse. In the two images in which the world appears unified, antagonism is discursively 'erased'. In this way, the whole world is claimed. When the space view of the globe appears, the identity transcends into this universal dimension that the image promotes. Each of these images illustrates how the spatial references become a central issue when they can be visualised.

To conclude, I link together the most relevant aspects related to the setting of antagonism. A sharp dichotomy of the portraits of legitimacy and neutrality represented the basic idea of a social field divided. Visually, the identities linked by antagonism coincide in creating indulgent self-images of virtuosity and pride and a tarnished and despicable representation of the other. As seen in the analysis, the configuration of locked antagonism becomes the 'contest of exceptionalism'. Each side of the divided field articulates its accounts of social objectivity in reference to what the other negates. However, each side also maintains the teleological claims of its project. This aspect reveals the dimension of hegemony that keeps antagonism active. It is in this negation of the other where the boundaries or chromatic divisions, as it is possible to appreciate, may entail permanent conflict. Through the discursive perspective, it was possible to

problematise those claims, appropriations and proclamations and see the emptiness of peace. The contest to assign a colour to the dove implies the consideration of a complex mobilisation of issues that correspond with the fixation of meaning. In these pieces for analysis, peace is instrumentalised, claimed and contested. Yet, all these moves are the examples of the tension between the necessary moments to fix and articulate a discourse and the impossibility to find a final foundation. Despite that the logic of equivalence is the main reference to understand the division, some images worked on the neutralisation of this logic and displayed visions of full objectivity or hegemony, in which antagonism seems inexistent.

Overall, the analysis in this setting shows how the three points of reference work in a context of conflict. The poststructural discursive perspective shed light on how claims of neutrality, legitimacy and universality become ontological, hiding how a particular claim obtains access to an undisputed place. In terms of the theoretical discussion, the significant issue is to ask what is beyond antagonism. In the social field taken as reference, antagonism was not solved via negotiation or cooperation; it was the impossibility of one side that turned the field into a new configuration. To some extent, the next analytical chapter deals with this.

8 ONE AMONG MANY WORLDS

Brothers and Sisters: Humanity lives in the chest of us all and, like the heart, it prefers to be on the left side.... It is not necessary to conquer the world. It is sufficient with making it new. Us. Today. Democracy! Liberty! Justice!

First Declaration of La Realidad

There has been a multiplication of dislocatory effects and a proliferation of new antagonisms, which is why the anti-globalization movement has to operate in an entirely new way: it must advocate the creation of equivalential links between deeply heterogeneous social demands while, at the same time, elaborating a common language

Ernesto Laclau

The last analytical chapter develops by framing what I will call a heterogeneous element that strives through the logics of difference and equivalence. I explained previously that I take one aspect of Laclau's notion of heterogeneity to understand a complementary logic from the previous two chapters. The general idea of Laclau's conceptualisation of heterogeneity is that this develops when a particular social demand is not attended or incorporated within the system (Laclau, 2005: 108). In a context in which homogeneity seems to represent all, this would imply that identity is complete, and new forms of identification are unnecessary. However, radical contingency shows that this context is not possible, as new identities and corresponding articulations are possible. There is a permanent outside that resist to be homogenised; still, it is constitutive of the identity of the homogenous (Phelan and Dahlberg, op. cit.: 16-24). Heterogeneity simultaneously explains the possibility and impossibility of a discourse, and it also delineates the primary definition of antagonism.¹⁶⁴ This means that heterogeneity indicates that something is still absent in a discourse or identity and that it does not necessarily imply a direct antagonistic setting (Laclau, 2004; 2005; Thomassen 2005; Dahlberg and Phelan, 2011). In my understanding, it is related to what Laclau and Mouffe refer to as the 'discursive exterior' (op. cit.: 110-1). This notion implies the excess of meaning that a discourse cannot include and that remains absent but does not

¹⁶⁴ In fact, if we consider how the notion of dislocation is used in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, it is possible to talk about a secondary conceptualization of antagonism. See: Laclau, 1990 and 2004: 319.

disappear. This argument exemplifies the point of contingent structures and identities and the possibility of re-articulation.

In Chapter 2, I stated that my adaptation of heterogeneity follows Laclau's idea about an element that represents the outside, which is still recognisable. However, Laclau explains that a set of heterogeneous demands cannot be represented in two antagonistic camps; therefore, "heterogeneity presupposes the absence of that common space" (2005: 140). The ideas of exclusion and presence are rather interesting because they indicate the transcendence of the heterogeneous element in constituting the social field. The actor and demands that I propose as heterogeneous elements do share a common space with other elements, but at the same time disrupt it and show the limits of the space.

The most interesting part for me to study is the situation of 'representing the margin' or, in other words, 'being the limit' and developing a counter-hegemonic position. By framing the concept in this way, it is possible to follow those excluded elements (identities) and show the way these marginalised elements articulate their accounts of social objectivity. As Thomassen claims, the heterogeneous element shows the ultimate contingency (2005: 301); therefore, I consider this element as the margin of the social field or the constitutive 'radical' outside. In this sense, "Yet identity is nonetheless made possible by the constitutive condition of heterogeneity: by escaping articulation, heterogeneous elements are not named within the discursive context; the discourse thus seems to represent all; it *seems* to be full" (Phelan and Dahlberg, op. cit.: 24). Following the idea that heterogeneity takes place through the omission or exclusion of a social demand; the analysis that I propose includes an example with this condition.

As I explained in the introduction, I propose to explore the contextualisation of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) as one element of heterogeneity and to study the related accounts of social objectivity. As such, the conceptual argument is that the way the movement emerged and entered the social and political context in Mexico could be considered as an element of heterogeneity. The main feature at this moment of dislocation was that the Zapatista movement or EZLN¹⁶⁵ declared war against the Mexican federal government. The relevance of the

¹⁶⁵ I will use this name as a general reference. This reference also includes persons or organisations supporting the Zapatistas. The acronyms EZLN (in Spanish) and the EZ were the most used names of reference. However, it is necessary to differentiate between the EZLN (the politico-military part) and other bodies or structures that exist for practical organisation within the Zapatista communities. The name *Zapatista* is based on the social and political leader Emiliano Zapata (1879-1919). He fought against Porfirio Díaz's regime during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). Zapata advocated for the redistribution of land and peasants' rights to own land.

movement lies in their origins, the social demands endorsed and the levels that their visions of social objectivity include. In this case, the EZLN exhibited the incompleteness of the discursive context and space (Mexico) by declaring war and claiming control of rebel territories. I frame the heterogeneous element to the act of rebellion. This element started from a remote geographical area where poverty and social exclusion have been endemic. This geographical feature, as well as social and political placement and articulation of social objectivity, caught my attention the most.

The Zapatista movement has been studied from diverse perspectives such as anti-globalisation, international relations, post-colonialism and subaltern studies¹⁶⁶ (Hard and Negri 2004, Forbis 2015, Laako 2011, Rabasa [1997] 2010). There are numerous¹⁶⁷ analyses and academic works that cover the historical context, the transition from being an armed movement to a social movement, autonomy, indigenous rights, forms of local governance and organisation, and the role of Zapatista women (Hayden, 2002, Khasnabish 2008, Mignolo 2002, Muñoz Ramirez (et. al.) 2008, Nash, 1997, Rabasa 2010). The EZLN's socio-political organisation and practices are considered as a 'radical' option to the institutional and 'traditional forms of governance (Khasnabish, 2010) and new forms of political and ethical engagement (Popke, 2004). The social demands and groups that this movement mobilised at the local context resonate at the different levels as well. Additionally, this is expressed in the Zapatistas' vision, not only for the indigenous communities in Mexico but also for the national concerns of the country and at the global level (Routledge, 2002). The Zapatista uprising has been regarded as the "movement of movements" guiding democratisation efforts worldwide (Marchart, 2004a: 419). This issue of transcending different contexts was one of the most interesting aspects that motivated me to address it through discursive analysis.

From this analytical perspective, the EZLN has been discursively studied concerning the hegemonic struggle between the movement and the Mexican government at the beginning of the conflict (Montesano Montessori, 2011, 2014). This analysis combined some concepts of discourse theory (hegemony, myth and imaginaries) and critical discourse analysis. Regarding the EZLN's visual discourse, it has been followed and analysed through photographs.¹⁶⁸ The analysis shows the ways a collective imaginary of the 'militant subject' has been part of the Zapatista identity with strong links to the

¹⁶⁶ However, Laclau's *On Populist Reason* did not mention the subaltern as a form of mass representation or organisation.

¹⁶⁷ In here, I only mention a few works published in English. I consider that these works include some of the best analyses to understand the Zapatista Movement.

¹⁶⁸ This analysis is based on the book *Corte de Caja: Entrevista al Subcomandante Marcos* by L.Castellanos and R. Trubulsi (2008) Grupo Editorial Endira Mexico.

guerrillas in Latin America (Susi, 2010). The other visual aspect that has been discussed through photography is the mediatisation of the movement and its visibility on the internet (Memou, 2013). Other works based on discourse theory point out the relevance of the universal-particular paradox and the constitution of identities, particularly about the women's struggles in Chiapas and the Zapatistas (Harvey and Halverson, 2000). In my approach to this actor, I do not intend to simplify the complexities, ethical issues and the multiple aspects related to the Zapatistas. My aim is more modest, as I intend to bring another aspect of this actor to light with the analytical context of this dissertation.

My analytical argument points out that the heterogeneous element conveys a disregarded situation from which an account of social objectivity is articulated. Thus, the analysis will give account of the discursive and identity conformation of the field after the dislocatory event. In this way, I will concentrate on the claims of and demands on social and political organisations that appear in the general views of the movement.¹⁶⁹ The accounts of social objectivity, in this case, are those demands of a social group (indigenous peasants) that have been systematically excluded and marginalised. In this situation, my concern is to understand the counter-hegemonic dynamics that are necessary to challenge the existing balance (Åkerstrøm Andersen, op. cit.: 115). In this way, I only focus on the EZLN discourse and not on the Mexican government.

8.1 Making up the setting of heterogeneity

This chapter consist of two parts:

- *Six Declarations for Rebel Dignity*
- *Zapatismo, snails, and the world(s)*

The point of departure is the irruption of an indigenous movement in southern Mexico with a set of demands that challenged the foundations of the social field where the movement dwelled. In the first part, I present an extensive revision and relevant features, quotes and the context of the six Declarations of the Lacandon Jungle. These Declarations were viewed as the 'official statements' that the Zapatistas used to

¹⁶⁹ It is necessary to clarify that the communities have their own structure of organisation, forms of governance and representation that work apart from the military organisation. Autonomy is one of the most important and valued features that guide the activities of the communities. For instance, the communities have different ways of thinking beyond the public discourse of the EZLN (Laako, 2011: 57-64).

communicate with Mexico and the world. With this revision, it is possible to follow the specific situations that the Zapatista movement faced at the conjuncture of the Declarations (1994-2005). In terms of discourse, the significant issues are the calls for fulfilling their demands and for changing the social, political, economic and cultural relations between indigenous communities and the rest of the Mexican population. In general, the context echoes the motives of the EZLN to declare war (conditions of exclusion and oppression that affected indigenous communities), the responsibility of the Mexican political system for this situation and the relation between the political establishment and the Zapatistas.

The second part goes into more detail about the ways the discourse visually appeals to the world. This means to 'ascend from the local to the global' but keep the discursive connection open. In this case, I rely on the first and second *Declarations of la Realidad for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism* and some images. The visual material that I included for this setting consists of mostly illustrations, drawings and photos of murals. My interest is to show part of the symbolism and collective identity of the movement. The immediate context in this section includes descriptions of the way civil society (national and international) related to the Zapatistas' accounts of social objectivity and the issue of identity. Concerning identity issues, it is the combination of the content and the forms the Zapatista movement addressed to the indigenous peoples inside and outside Mexico, the Mexican people and the rest of the world that makes this case worthy of analysis. The way the Zapatista movement mobilised its identity was one of the most interesting features of this case. This issue helps to understand the possibilities to transcend the immediate level of actorness and engage with other social fields. This will show the connection of the local communities to wider spaces and vice-versa. In some way, the obvious reference would have been one directly related to the 'world level'. I noticed, nonetheless, that the Zapatista movement had many visual and rhetoric allusions to the world. In fact, the relation between the binary local/global levels is one of the most interesting features in terms of analysing the formation of accounts of social objectivity.

The situation and context of the Zapatistas are normally regarded as performing 'local actorness' and as not having a national influence in the Mexican context. In contention to this, the proposition of choosing the visions of social objectivity of the Zapatistas is to show that this 'marginal' positioning and the content of their demands make them a relevant example. Furthermore, while the zone of influence is the state of Chiapas (Mexico), wherein the activities occur, the Zapatista's discourse is acknowledged as highly influential with the anti-globalisation movements. Therefore,

the universal-particular paradox is a good reference to observe the movement's accounts of social objectivity.

On the practicalities of the analysis, I will use the English translations available¹⁷⁰ when presenting quotes from the Declarations. It is a particular feature of the Zapatista's Declarations, statements and other pieces to make straightforward criticisms and claims combined with poetry and rich symbolic and evocative references to the human condition. This is complemented with a selection of photos (wall paintings) and images (posters and drawings). The importance and use of visuals for the Zapatistas will be made evident. This material will help to envision the accounts and discourse of social objectivity that the Zapatistas endorse. In this chapter, my approach to the immediate and intended context will be entirely displayed because of the close relation of the Declarations' content and the situation that the Zapatistas experienced. In regard to the former, I give all the information of the historical situation, while, for the latter, I develop the analysis of the discourse, the logics of equivalence and difference, the way the identities involved appeal to wider visions of social and political organisation and other aspects.

8.2 Six Declarations for Rebel Dignity

The 1st of January 1994 was the first official day of the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It was a 'historical day' for the Mexican economy. However, history was also made in the mountains of Chiapas, Mexico. On that same day, the EZLN released the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle¹⁷¹ proclaiming war against the Mexican federal government.

The opening words are,

TODAY WE SAY: ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

To the people of Mexico:

Mexican brothers and sisters:

We are a product of 500 years of struggle: first against slavery, then during the War of Independence against Spain led by insurgents, then to avoid being absorbed by North

¹⁷⁰ The translated versions are the ones available in some websites supporting or related to the EZLN. They may contain original mistakes in the translation. I compared all of the Declarations in their original and translated versions, and I will note, according to my interpretation, if the quotation I present does not match the original text.

¹⁷¹ This Declaration is dated in 1993 but it was public on the first of January.

American imperialism, then to promulgate our constitution and expel the French empire from our soil...

They don't care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no food nor education. Nor are we able to freely and democratically elect our political representatives, nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace nor justice for ourselves and our children.

But today, we say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. We are the inheritors of the true builders of our nation. The dispossessed, we are millions and we thereby call upon our brothers and sisters to join this struggle as the only path...

These extracts to show the first 'official words' from the Zapatistas to the rest of the world. These statements present significant issues for our analysis. Specifically, I am referring to the forms their identity is expressed. First, the whole social field is addressed (the people of Mexico, brothers and sisters) but immediately thereafter, a sharp distinction of 'we versus they' is evident. This can be regarded as the main counter-hegemonic strategy that is displayed. In another paragraph of the First Declaration, this 'they' is personified with the President of Mexico and his political party.¹⁷²

In the rest of the First Declaration, there are explanations about the armed insurrection addressing the population. In addition, some instructions to the EZLN military forces about specific actions are included. The last paragraph calls for support from the Mexican people to achieve the following,

work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace

These demands became a point of identification in the general discourse of the movement and were widely used in all the Declarations and statements of the Zapatistas. For the analytical scope, the most relevant aspects of the First Declaration are presented in terms of the promotion of an identity, the legitimacy of the movement and mobilisation of certain reference points. The logic of equivalence shows that the Zapatista identity develops in reference to a main antagonist. We can see that, in this case, a project that starts from a disregarded position has viability by projecting its conditions and demands with respect to the actor or structure that holds the political power. In this case, we can talk about the same figure, which concurrently encompasses the actor and the structure. The way negativity appears as a constitutive feature is clear. Nonetheless, this is expressed only to a highly specific figure. The entrance of the

¹⁷² The president was Carlos Salinas de Gortari and the party is *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party) The party is normally referred with the acronym *PRI*.

element of heterogeneity into the social space represents a moment of dislocation, and an element that was internally excluded at some point questions the ongoing structure.

At the moment of dislocation, the excluded regain presence and new dynamics follow through.

In contrast to this negativity, the element of heterogeneity traces a hegemonic line while placing its own identity and projecting it to the rest of the social field. This is when the EZLN calls for “Mexican brothers and sisters” while explaining that “We are the inheritors of the true builders of our nation”. This statement claims the very foundation of what became the Mexican nation. This claim, then, places the EZLN project in the original source of legitimacy that is embodied in the indigenous population. In addition to this, in the First Declaration, the EZLN invokes Article 39 (quoted in the text) of the Constitution of the United States of Mexico.¹⁷³ This article declares the following,

National Sovereignty essentially and originally resides in the people. All political power emanates from the people and its purpose is to help the people. The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify their form of government

The reference to the Mexican Constitution and the invocation of Article 39 can be contextualised in two ways. The political struggle is targeted against one specific antagonist and not to the whole system. This means that in this Declaration, the EZLN did not call for ignoring or overruling the Mexican Constitution but instead called for some significant changes in the practices. The second issue concerns the reference to the sovereign in the political arrangement that regulates the social field. In this way, the identity of the EZLN is aligned with the Mexican peoples. The next paragraph is an example of this combination of identity formation and some references to legitimacy.

We have the Mexican people on our side, we have the beloved tri-colored flag highly respected by our insurgent fighters. We use black and red in our uniform as our symbol of our working people on strike. Our flag carries the following letters, "EZLN," Zapatista Army of National Liberation, and we always carry our flag into combat

The EZLN takes position along with the most important element of the social field that is the population and reinforce the national character of the project by mentioning the “tri-colored” flag (the Mexican flag). In the images that will be presented later, it is possible to see the flag and the black and red colours.

Continuing with the Second Declaration, this starts,

TODAY WE SAY "WE WILL NOT SURRENDER

¹⁷³ This is the official name of the country included in the Constitution of 1917.

It addresses,

To the people of MEXICO, To the peoples and governments of the world

In the first part the Declaration (published in June 1994) celebrates the way Mexican people (also referred as "Civil Society") reacted to the EZLN and demanded to the Mexican Government to stop the military offensive against them. From this situation, the issue of sovereignty is employed to demand for radical changes to the political system. The reference to sovereignty reads,

Our call transcends one single presidential term or an upcoming presidential election. Our sovereignty resides in CIVIL SOCIETY. It is the people, who can, at any time, alter or modify our form of government, and who have already assumed this responsibility

The next points are quite relevant for the discursive dynamics. The Second Declaration calls for,

the death of the current Mexican political system is a necessary, although insufficient, condition for the transition to democracy in our country

a new framework of national, regional and local political relationships: a framework of Democracy, Liberty and Justice

The new scenario is justified and explained in this way,

In this new framework, the problem of power will not be question of who the incumbent is, but rather of who exercises the power. If the majority of the people exercise the power, political parties will see themselves as obliged to confront the majority instead of each other.

A new way of approaching the problem of power in this framework of Democracy, Liberty and Justice will create a new political culture within the parties.

We are not proposing a new world, but rather a much earlier stage: the entryway to the new Mexico. In this sense, this revolution will not conclude in a new class, fraction of class or group in power, but rather in a free and democratic "space" of political struggle

This free and democratic "space" will be born on the grave of presidencialismo¹⁷⁴ and the putrid cadaver of the State party system. A new political relationship will be born. It will be a new politics, based not on the confrontation among political organisations

¹⁷⁴ This expression refers to the way the figure of the president has been the main source of authority in the Mexican political system. This situation evolved mainly because the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*PRI*) controlled many decades the Congress of the Union that consist on the Senate of the Republic and the Chamber of Deputies. In consequence, the president had undisputed power in relation to the rest of national institutions.

themselves, but rather on the confrontation between different social classes¹⁷⁵ over various political proposals. Political power will depend on the REAL support of these social classes, not on the exercise of political power, in itself.

The element of heterogeneity refers to a “free and democratic space of political struggle”. There is a substantial difference in this declaration because the ruling constitution was deemed inoperative. The Declaration called for organising a national convention with the name “Diálogo Nacional por la Democracia, la Libertad y la Justicia” (National Democratic Convention for Democracy, Liberty and Justice). The main goals of the Convention were to discuss, with all the sectors of the Mexican society, the new foundations of the political system; to promulgate a new constitution; to form a transitional government; and to organise presidential elections.

For my analysis, the Second Declaration offers two salient aspects: the call for a different political system and a consideration of “Democracy, Liberty and Justice”¹⁷⁶ as foundations for the new pact. Firstly, calling for a new political system demands a factor of legitimacy. This comes with the call, “Our sovereignty resides in CIVIL SOCIETY”. In this way, the project claims the factor and places their account of social objectivity. The call for a different political system is the ontic aspect of specific governmental strategies and the second is from an ontological view because these three demands became the reason of being for the project. In terms of the articulation, these three notions are the nodal points from which the rest of the signifiers develop. They are not openly defined but become the grounds of the social and political coexistence to organise the social and political fields.

In addition to this, there is an extraordinary change compared to the First Declaration in terms of the reach of the demands. While in the Second Declaration, the antagonism is targeted to the federal government and ruling party, the new demand represented a complete rupture and re-foundation of the political space. This is a clear example of what the post-foundational stance argues about the limits and contingency. In this case, the new account of social objectivity exposes the limitations of the system. Additionally, an interesting part is the feature of what “new political relationship” entails.

In the second section reads,

¹⁷⁵ It is worth to notice the ideological background of using of “social classes” as a way to categorise the population.

¹⁷⁶ These demands are based on Emiliano Zapata’s dictum “Reform, Freedom, Justice and Law” as expressed in the Plan de Ayala. This plan included all the social and political demands of Zapata’s revolutionary movement during the Mexican Revolution.

Within this new political relationship, each of the different groups with proposals for differing systems or directions (socialism, capitalism social-democratic, liberalism, Christian-Democratic, etc.) will have to convince the majority of the Nation that its proposal is the best for the country

These categorisations, or identities, rule out the political parties as legitimate institutions and promote these political viewpoints. It demands a shift from antagonism (after founding again the system) into a stance in which “confrontation” is “over various political proposals”. This stance can be framed as agonistic to some extent. In my opinion, the intended ‘new political relationship’ does not try to overcome all the negative aspects (antagonism) and instead deals with these aspects. The issue of identity also offers noteworthy examples. In the last part of the Second Declaration the first wide call of identification is made.

Therefore we call upon all our Mexican indigenous brothers and sisters to resist with us. We call upon all the campesinos to resist with us, upon the factory workers, the clerks, the neighbourhood residents, the housewives, the students, the teachers, those who make thought and word their life, all of those who have dignity and pride, we call everyone to resist with us

This call of identity also implies a step forward from the “dispossessed” to a chain of difference that puts together a wide display of social identifications linked in this call to the EZLN’s project. I consider this chain as difference and not as equivalence, because the groups are not faced against a direct antagonist. They share a main identity (Mexicans). Moreover, the EZLN never called the Mexican population to join the armed struggle, and there were no violent or political conflicts within Mexican society.

In this way, the heterogeneous element shows changes from the initial circumstances to the juncture reflected in this Declaration. The situation with the Mexican government was still problematic, although the ceasefire was declared. The negotiations were stalled and the EZLN denounced harassment on the part of many actors. The EZLN still had a disadvantaged position as an ‘armed and rebel group’ challenging the institutional framework. However, despite having a disregarded position, a dimension of counter-hegemony is displayed with the new political demands articulated. I contend that the possibility to ask for such radical change was because the social demand prompting the movement was deemed legitimate by part of a major component of the social field. In other words, the Mexican people did not support the armed option because the demand for revindication of the indigenous people was legitimate. Another issue to highlight is that for the first time, the “. . . peoples and governments of the world” are addressed. In my understanding, the chain of difference and the call for other peoples and

governments reinforce that aspect underlined about the first steps to develop a hegemonic stance.

Commemorating the first year after the insurrection, the Third Declaration of the Selva Lacandona (January 1995) was released. The first part of this Declaration features an evaluation of the political situation in Mexico after the presidential elections of August 1994. The opposition parties and many social organisations rejected the process and results of the election and viewed them as fraudulent. This situation is referred to in this way (emphasis in original),

An electoral process that is corrupt, immoral, unfair and illegitimate culminated in a new mockery of the good will of the citizens. The party-State system reaffirmed its antidemocratic vocation and imposed, in all parts and at all levels, its arrogance.

Reports from the National Democratic Convention, the Civic Alliance, and the Commission for Truth brought to light what the mass media had hidden, with shameful complicity: a gigantic fraud. The multitude of irregularities, the inequity, the corruption, the cheating, the intimidation, the robbery and the lying--they made the elections the dirtiest ones in Mexico's history

These statements reflected the context about the new president's strategy that reactivated the military option against the EZLN. I want to underline that the expression "party-State system" refers to the political party (PRI) that ruled Mexico between 1930 and 2000. The expression exemplifies the situation of having the same political party controlling the national presidency, the majority in the Congress of the Union (Senate and Chamber of Deputies), and the government, congress, and municipalities of the States.¹⁷⁷ The second part shows how the antagonist, the "party-State system", is presented in the discourse. The other important issue was the economic crisis that started in December 1994. According to the EZLN, the crisis exposed the ways the political, economic, and social agenda of the neoliberal project affected the Mexican society.

The Declaration's first part closes in this way,

The indigenous question will not have a solution if there is not a RADICAL transformation of the national pact. The only means of incorporating, with justice and dignity, the indigenous of the Nation, is to recognize the characteristics of their own social, political and cultural organisation. Autonomy is not separation; it is integration of the most humble and forgotten minorities of contemporary Mexico.

Today we repeat: OUR STRUGGLE IS NATIONAL

Today we reaffirm: FOR EVERYONE, EVERYTHING, NOTHING FOR US!"

¹⁷⁷ This means a constituent state as part of the country's political organisation. There are 32 federal states in Mexico.

The economic, political, social and repressive program of neoliberalism has demonstrated its inefficiency, its deceptions, and the cruel injustice that is its essence. Neoliberalism as a doctrine and as a reality should be flung into the trash heap of national history

I selected these fragments to discuss different aspects. The first paragraph shows the ‘degree of dislocation’ that the element of heterogeneity brought to the field demanding the “radical transformation” of the political system. The crucial aspect in this transformation is the claim for autonomy. It is for the first time that this notion is presented, and it is important to observe that autonomy is framed as a way to integrate indigenous population by giving the means of self-administration and governance. The EZLN did not demand a territorial separation at any point. This does not mean that this type of claim cannot be made by an actor regarded as a heterogeneous element. The point is that the EZLN’s account of social objectivity did not consider this situation. Other aspect is the reference to neoliberalism that implies a clear ideological perspective. The structural reforms, the liberalisation of the Mexican economy, and privatisation of public services started in the mid 1980’s. Moreover, as commented, the NAFTA treaty started at the beginning of 1994. Economic liberalisation had a very negative impact for the Mexican agricultural producers and peasants.¹⁷⁸ In this way, the EZLN takes the role of the opposition against the socio-political system that neoliberalism represents. Turning into the specific calls of the Declaration, these are the most relevant parts for the analytical concern,

We call upon all social and political forces of the country, to all honest Mexicans, to all of those who struggle for the democratization of the national reality, to form a NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT, including the National Democratic Convention and ALL forces, without distinction by religious creed, race or political ideology, who are against the system of the State party

This National Liberation Movement will struggle from a common accord, by all means, at all levels, for the installation of a transitional government, a new constitutional body, a new constitution, and the destruction of the system of the Party- State

In the first paragraph, the formation of identity moves into two directions: one addressing the individual level with a quality (being honest) and the other for collective organisation (“ALL forces, without distinction...”). In the analysis of the Second Declaration, I mentioned that the chain of difference displayed in the discourse includes different social groups. The following paragraph shows the expansion of this chain adding very specific groups and identities (capital letter in original),

¹⁷⁸ For instance, see: Forbis, 2015.

WE CALL UPON THE WORKERS OF THE REPUBLIC, THE WORKERS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND THE CITIES, THE NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS, THE TEACHERS AND THE STUDENTS OF MEXICO, THE WOMEN OF MEXICO, THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY, THE HONEST ARTISTS AND INTELLECTUALS, THE RESPONSIBLE RELIGIOUS MEMBERS, THE COMMUNITY- BASED MILITANTS OF THE DIFFERENT POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

While creating the link between groups that were not actively connected beforehand, there are still some points of tension within this identity. Calling for “all honest Mexicans”, or “honest artists” conveys that the groups within the field are categorised. The quality demanded (honesty) implies that the ones lacking it, or in opposition to it, are not part of this movement. This is a source of antagonism. In this case, I am referring to *equivalence* because there is an ‘Other’ disrupting the unity. My point is to show how the heterogeneous element traces a line that has a hegemonic perspective on one side (calling for many groups), but also makes distinctions regarding who can be part of it. These are some of the closing words in the Third Declaration,

Peace will come hand in hand with democracy, liberty and justice for all Mexicans

As with Benito Juárez¹⁷⁹ in the face of French intervention, the Motherland¹⁸⁰ marches today at the side of the patriotic forces, against the anti-democratic forces and authorities. Today we say: “The Motherland lives! And she is ours! Democracy! Liberty! Justice!

Claiming the defence of the national symbols or the “custody of the Motherland” needs to be assessed beyond the rhetorical anecdote. It is the issue of confronted legitimacies between the whole political structure and the element that challenges this structure. Taking this reference, the discourse places different reference points on the same line. I contend that the way democracy, liberty and justice, as demands and foundations, represent the nodal points promoting the account of objectivity. Their meaning developed in reference to the problems and deficiencies of the Mexican political system. As I explained, social and political movements such as the Zapatistas regarded the political party ruling Mexico for 70 years as corrupt and anti-democratic. ‘Justice’ refers to the social exclusion, unattended needs and precarious conditions that have historically affected all indigenous communities in Mexico. It refers to the systematic disregard of the politicians to specific social groups in the country, to the rampant corruption in the justice and public system, and to the misuse of public economic

¹⁷⁹ Juárez was the president of Mexico during the French invasion 1862-1867.

¹⁸⁰ This refers to homeland or fatherland. In Spanish, it corresponds to *La Patria* (feminine noun).

resources. Liberty, in my opinion, entailed the recognition of rights of indigenous populations, their full application and the overcoming of all economic and social problems.

I make a 'mid-point' assessment of these three Declarations. The question of identity needs a detailed description. I consider that thinking about 'layers' can provide a better understanding of it. Obviously, the indigenous population of Mexico is the core identity. As expressed in the First Declaration, this population is framed as "the inheritors of the true builders of our nation". In this way, the period before the Spanish colonisation and occupation is mobilised to ground this first and most significant layer. It puts forward the idea of the "original habitants" and the legitimation that this implies. These sorts of statements appeal to the essence of what later became the "Mexican nation". A 'second layer' was noticed through the chain of differences when, in the Second and Third Declarations, a wide group of social identities are aligned as part of the project. This is extended into the following layer that is framed into a national level and in a patriotic style. The phrase "BROTHERS AND SISTERS: Peace will come hand in hand with democracy, liberty and justice for all Mexicans" exemplifies this issue. Discursively, the idea of unity lies beneath the account of objectivity, and this is expressed through the collective identity. This way of associating many social groups allows this actor to have a determinant presence in the social and political fields.

In the discourse, the EZLN places itself as a representative of the Mexican people, bringing the point of sovereignty in play. In commenting on this last issue, I try to situate the negativity in this scenario. Until this point, the element of heterogeneity irrupts and claims a position in the social field. This occurs as due to pointing to the element of antagonism (party-state system) and considering it as an illegitimate actor. This idea was expanded in the discourse, and the idea of 'bad government' included other actors and institutions. In addition, many other actors or situations are recognised as being part of the problem. Slavery, the Spanish dominion, North American imperialism, Porfirio Diaz (former president of Mexico considered as a dictator) and the French intervention are mentioned. These issues are the antagonist elements that negate the Zapatista identity. For instance, in this last quotation presented, the social field is divided between 'patriotic and anti-democratic forces'. In terms of discourse theory, this is the antagonist constituting the identity of the other.

My final comment on these Declarations addresses the aspect of hegemony. In the presentation of the Declarations, I state that there are some moves that can be considered as hegemonic. The discourse constructs a chain of differences, thus exposing that the people in general, and indigenous people in particular, are the original source of power and command. In this way, "peasants, factory workers, housewives, students,

artists or intellectuals” were considered to take part in the creation of the new legal and political framework. Additionally, national identity works as the core point of identification and reinforces the position of the project. From my understanding, these manoeuvres contain ‘traces of hegemony’. However, the element of antagonism is also present in these traces. One example of establishing hegemony is when terms patriotic and anti-democratic are used. Being patriotic allows one to claim that ‘the Motherland is in our side’. In the setting of antagonism, the logic was the same when peace was presented as achievable only through the intervention of one side. In this case, the discourse makes calls for “national union” as an attempt to achieve better positioning and legitimacy in reference to the antagonist elements.

Let us continue our walk in the Lacandon Jungle. The Fourth Declaration (January 1996) states at the beginning,

Our fight is for history and the bad government proposes to erase history.

Our fight is for the homeland, and the bad government dreams with the flag and the language of foreigners.

Our fight is for peace, and the bad government announces war and destruction

The reference to ‘language’ is used to depict the sharp division in the social and political fields. The EZLN discourse links the Mexican federal government with foreign interests.¹⁸¹ Afterwards, the reference to ‘languages’ make a dramatic statement,

But the rebellion which now has a dark face and an indigenous language was not born today. It spoke before with other languages and in other lands. This rebellion against injustice spoke in many mountains and many histories

This statement is supported with the list of 40 indigenous languages.¹⁸² The point that I want to underline is the way the historic background of the indigenous population is used to show the dimension of the social demands supported by the Zapatista movement. In terms of the content, the first part explains the negotiation and tensions

¹⁸¹ This is not mentioned in the Declaration, but it refers to the economic policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to the liberalisation of the economy and to the influence and presence of transnational companies in the Mexican economy.

¹⁸² These are: nahuatl, paipai, kiliwa, cucapa, cochimi, kumiai, yuma, seri, chontal, chinanteco, pame, chichimeca, otomi, mazahua, matlatzinca, ocuilteco, zapoteco, solteco, chatino, papabuco, mixteco, cucateco, triqui, amuzzgo, mazateco, chocho, ixcaateco, huave, tlapaneco, totonaca, tepehua, populuca, mixe, zoque, huasteco, lacandon, mayo, chol, tzeltal, tzotzil, tojolabal, mame, teco, ixil, aguacateco, motocinteco, chicomucelteco.

with the Federal Government.¹⁸³ On the other hand, the Declaration celebrated that the ‘Plebiscite for Peace and Democracy’ was a successful event with a massive participation of national and international organisations of the civil society. Following the results of this plebiscite, the Zapatistas launched three initiatives: “Intercontinental dialogue in opposition to neoliberalism”, “the formation of civic committees of dialogue” and “the construction of the new Aguascalientes”.¹⁸⁴

At the end of this first part, there are two paragraphs that need quotation at length due to the substantial content for the analysis,

In summary, 1995 was characterized by the definition of two national projects completely different and contradictory. On the one hand, the national project of the Powerful, a project which entails the total destruction of the Mexican nation;... This project finds in the PRI its criminal face and in the PAN¹⁸⁵ its pretense of democracy.

By recognizing that there are two national projects face to face, it can be argued that the setting of antagonism dominates the field. This is partially correct, but I contend that the place of the Zapatista movement was still in disadvantage, and thus, remaining in a disregarded position.

Then, the next paragraph declares,

On the other hand, the project of a transition to democracy, not a transition within a corrupt system[...]; the defense of national sovereignty; justice and hope as aspirations; truth and government through obedience as a guide for leadership; the stability and security given by democracy and liberty; dialogue, tolerance and inclusion as a new way of making politics. This project must still be created and it will correspond, not to a homogeneous political force or to the geniality of an individual, but to a broad opposition movement capable of gathering the sentiments of the nation.

The remarkable issue in these two quotations is the full vision of social objectivity articulated including a “new way of making politics”. In the binary setting of two projects in opposition, the visions reproduce the internal/external duplet of claiming and negating. As in the previous chapter, the situation declared by the Zapatistas takes a hierarchical structure in which legitimacy is only in one side. The most relevant issue in the Fourth Declaration was the establishment of the *Zapatista Front of National Liberation*.

¹⁸³ The first negotiation of the San Andres Accords was taking place during this period. The most relevant issues negotiated were the autonomy, rights, and self-determination of indigenous communities.

¹⁸⁴ This refers to a territorial unit.

¹⁸⁵ This refers to the conservative party *Partido Acción Nacional* (National Action Party). The party is normally referred with the acronym *PAN*.

This is considered as,

civil and nonviolent organisation, independent and democratic, Mexican and national, which struggles for democracy, liberty, and justice in Mexico.

A political force which is called a FRONT because it incorporates organisational efforts which are non-partisan, and has many levels of participation and many forms of struggle

A political force called ZAPATISTA because it is born with the hope and the indigenous heart which, together with the EZLN, descended again from the Mexican mountains

The Front aimed to organise social and political demands avoiding any institutionalisation or becoming a political party. The main objective was the fulfilment of the 13 demands listed in the First Declaration. Other important issue in this document is that for the first time the notion of self-government appeared. This relates to the point of autonomy negotiated with the Mexican Government. This Declaration represents a new aspect into the setting of heterogeneity. One of the features in the identity of this actor changed. 'Army' was replaced by 'Front'. The aim was to bring together a wide network of support among different social groups. In the context of this Declaration, the element of heterogeneity still challenged the antagonist force but in a different condition than the initial one. However, I argue that it kept a 'marginal' position because it did not engage in a process of institutionalisation. This would have implied a normalisation and acceptance of the system that was confronting.

In terms of identity formation, there are new references that are worth to present. In this Declaration the common identity includes,

factory workers of the Republic, to the laborers of the countryside and of the cities, to the indigenous peoples, to the colonos, to responsible priests and nuns¹⁸⁶

Another interesting call concerning identity is,

We call upon all those men and women of Mexico, the indigenous and those who are not indigenous, we call upon all the peoples who form this Nation

The distinction 'not indigenous' was not used before. This is an interesting point to follow for the implications into the collectivity that a project aims to construct. I stated before that the indigenous identity is at the core of this account; however, as seen in many quotes, the patriotic aspect of the discourse always stressed the Mexican identity. This is the general identity and point of convergence within all the groups within the

¹⁸⁶ I make emphasis on the last part due to the historic role and influence of the Catholic Church in the social and political affairs of the country.

society. However, pointing into an ‘essential difference’ (indigenous and not-indigenous) can be a factor of dislocation. Nonetheless, in the way the difference is presented, the equivalence in these two distinctions works as a uniting factor.

Two years and a half later, the Fifth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle was made public (July 1998). This is the lengthiest documents of this type with seven sections.¹⁸⁷ The Declaration explains the difficulties since the insurrection and the position of “dignity and silent resistance” of the movement. These notions are emphasised because the actions of the Mexican government were hostile even when both parties held different negotiations.¹⁸⁸

In this context, the Fifth Declaration calls,

FOR THE RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIAN PEOPLES, TO
END THE WAR OF EXTERMINATION

In addition, the Declaration explains the actions to promote a new legal frame for the indigenous communities. In this Declaration, ‘indigenous’ or ‘Indian’ are widely used if compared with the four previous. These are examples of the ways these signifiers are uses the construction and promotion of identity,

A better and new country is necessary and possible with the indigenous peoples. Without them there is no future at all as a Nation

The word of the first inhabitants of these lands now holds a special place in public opinion. The "indigenous" is no longer tourism or artisanry, but rather the struggle against poverty and for dignity

In this way, this population is not vindicated as ‘folkloric reference’ but as an active foundation for the new social and political pact demanded. In other part reads,

This is the hour of the Indian peoples of all Mexico. We call on them so that, together, we can continue struggling for the rights that history, reason, and truth have given us... we will let everyone know, through civil and peaceful means, that we are the roots of the Nation, its dignified foundation, its struggling present, its inclusive future. We call on them so that, together, we will struggle for a place of respect alongside all Mexicans

¹⁸⁷ These are: I. Resistance and Silence II. Against the War, Not Another War, but the Same Dignified and Silent Resistance III. San Andres: A National Law for All the Indigenous Peoples and a Law for Peace IV. Dialogue and Negotiation, Possible Only if Real V. We Resist, We Continue VI. It is the Hour of the Indigenous Peoples, Civil Society, and the Congress of the Union VII. Time for the Word of Peace.

¹⁸⁸ The most important agreement is the San Andrés Accords (1996). This includes the recognition of the right of autonomy and territory to indigenous communities.

The Zapatista movement appears as point of reference for this population but do not claim being the only actor representing them. The expression “we are the roots of the Nation” personify the role of original inhabitants that were colonised and exploited by the Spanish conquerors. Nevertheless, they are considered as the core of what later became the ‘Mexican nation’ and identity. This Declaration includes for the first time these groups,

...small business owners, small shopkeepers and businessmen, retired persons, disabled,
... homosexuals and lesbians...to debtors and HIV-positive...

This way to articulate a wide chain of identities appears twice in this Declaration. In both cases, the national identity works as principal reference. All together form a multi-layered identity for the indigenous identity and social groups. In addition, this Declaration includes an initial discursive link between the way the Zapatista’s accounts of social objectivity and identity relates to the ‘world’. This is enounced in these terms,

We call on the People of Mexico and on the men and women of the entire planet to unite their steps and their efforts with us in this stage of the struggle for liberty, democracy, and justice

We have also, together with others, extended bridges to the entire world and we have contributed to the creation (alongside men and women of the 5 continents) of a great network¹⁸⁹ which struggles through peaceful means against neoliberalism, and resists by fighting for a new and better world. We have also contributed something to the birth of a new and fresh cultural movement which struggles for a "new man" and new worlds

Including “fighting for a new and better world” and mentioning the creation of “new man and new worlds” adds a new teleological dimension to the discourse. In these two paragraphs the central issue is that the identity and project reach a new spatial dimension when “men and women of the 5 continents” are evoked and included. The significant aspect is that the development of the project that irrups the social space in a disregarded situation intends to overcome its immediacy. In this way, the connecting line starting from the local communities in Chiapas up to the five continents is traced. The Fifth Declaration closes with the section “Time for the Word of Peace”, it reads in the first sentence,

The time has now passed in which the war of the powerful has spoken, may it speak no more. It is now the time for peace to speak, the peace which we all deserve and need, the peace with justice and dignity

¹⁸⁹ This refers to the Intercontinental Gatherings organised two years before.

The following image called *Paloma Zapatista* (Zapatista Dove, circa 2010) illustrates the visual representation of the ‘Zapatista peace’. The ‘rebel dove’ holds the Zapatista red star. Below the star, it reads (in Spanish), justice, democracy and liberty.



(1)

The rhetorical composition of the image combines the basic elements of the Zapatista identity: black balaclava (rebel), red star (political ideology) and the three demands/foundations of the movement. The red star is commonly associated with communism, but I did not find any ‘formal ideology’ allegiance in all the official documents and pieces for analysis reviewed. There are general calls to cooperate with organisations “on the left”, and the only direct reference of this kind is one interview to the Subcomandante Marcos.¹⁹⁰ In terms of discourse, peace as a signifier is an important novel element in the articulation of the actor.

The last stop in this first part of the chapter is the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (2005, published after seven years). It was the last Declaration of this kind¹⁹¹ and the content is particularly relevant for the accounts of social objectivity that the Zapatista movement enacts. It comprises six parts¹⁹² and the style points to a historic reflection of the movement’s trajectory. The first paragraph already clarifies the ‘essence’ of the Declaration,

¹⁹⁰ “[T]he Zapatismo...is and is not Marxist-Leninist. The Zapatismo is not fundamentalist or mileniarist indigenous thinking...It is a mixture of all that crystallizes in the EZLN” quoted in Mignolo (2000:86). I will comment on the ‘ideological’ aspect in the second part of the chapter.

¹⁹¹ This does not imply that the movement stop releasing information. In their websites the information is available on the daily basis. However, there is no an ‘official’ website but a net of pages and some affiliated organisations that are part of the movement that publish information direct from the EZLN.

¹⁹² These are: I – *What We Are*, II- *Where We Are Now* III- *How We see the world*, IV- *How We see our country which is Mexico*, V- *What We want to do*, VI- *How We are going to do it*.

our simple word for recounting what our path has been and where we are now, in order to explain how we see the world and our country, in order to say what we are thinking of doing and how we are thinking of doing it, and in order to invite other persons to walk with us in something very great which is called Mexico and something greater which is called the world

The first two parts (I- “What We are”, II- “Where We are now”) give a retrospective view of 12 years of the movement. The EZLN denounces the military, political, ideological and economic attacks and persecution in all these years. It makes clear their disappointment and distrust for the federal government and main political parties.¹⁹³ The main complaint is that the law voted by the parliament did not include all the agreements negotiated before.

The second part explains the ways the Zapatista communities developed their forms and practices of self-governance,

It is the self-governance of the communities. In other words, no one from outside comes to govern, but the peoples themselves decide, among themselves, who governs and how, and, if they do not obey, they are removed. If the one who governs does not obey the people, they pursue them, they are removed from authority, and another comes in

I mentioned before that democracy was generally referred but this last quotation include more concrete ideas about what the Zapatistas consider on this issue. The political organisation in the Zapatista territories is known as the “Juntas de Buen Gobierno” (Good Government Juntas) and are organised in “Autonomous Municipalities”. In addition, this part also includes the explanation about that the military section became under the civilian control. The rest of this section celebrates the new generations of Zapatistas and the increasing support in the national and international contexts. The closing statement of this part is,

A new step forward in the indigenous struggle is only possible if the indigenous join together with workers, campesinos, students, teachers, employees...the workers of the city and the countryside

Previously to this statement, it is recognised that the Zapatista movement cannot go any further without the risk to be affected and lose what was achieved. This is the reason that in this quotation the call is to unite with other social groups.

¹⁹³ This included the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (Party of the Democratic Revolution). The party is normally referred with the acronym *PRD*. This party was also heavily criticised because voted the law that did not included all the points of the San Andres Accords. Previously, some leaders and public figures of this party supported the EZLN.

A new step forward in the indigenous struggle is only possible if the indigenous join together with workers, campesinos, students, teachers, employees...the workers of the city and the countryside

The third section named “how we see the World” shows their views on capitalism and neoliberalism. I will quote at length to follow the articulation on many issues.

Capitalism¹⁹⁴ is considered as,

a way in which a society goes about organising things and people, and who has and who has not, and who gives orders and who obeys. In capitalism, there are some people who have money, or capital, and factories and stores and fields and many things, and there are others who have nothing but their strength and knowledge in order to work

...merchandise of people, of nature, of culture, of history, of conscience. According to capitalism, everything must be able to be bought and sold. And it hides everything behind the merchandise, so we don't see the exploitation that exists

And then capitalism needs many markets...or a very large market, a world market

The explanation continues and the focus shifts to neoliberalism, I include all the paragraphs to follow how the antagonist-other is acknowledged and how their own position develops in reference to this,

And so the capitalism of today is not the same as before, when the rich were content with exploiting the workers in their own countries, but now they are on a path which is called Neoliberal Globalization. This globalization means that they no longer control the workers in one or several countries, but the capitalists are trying to dominate everything all over the world. And the world, or Planet Earth, is also called the “globe”, and that is why they say “globalization,” or the entire world

And neoliberalism is the idea that capitalism is free to dominate the entire world, and so tough, you have to resign yourself and conform and not make a fuss, in other words, not rebel...Then, in neoliberal globalization, the great capitalists who live in the countries which are powerful, like the United States, want the entire world to be made into a big business where merchandise is produced like a great market.

Then the global capitalists insert themselves everywhere, in all the countries, in order to do their big business, their great exploitation. Then they respect nothing, and they meddle wherever they wish. As if they were conquering other countries. That is why we Zapatistas say that neoliberal globalization is a war of conquest of the entire world, a world war, a war being waged by capitalism for global domination. Sometimes that conquest is by armies who invade a country and conquer it by force. But sometimes it is with the economy... and they also insert their ideas, with the capitalist culture which is the culture of merchandise, of profits, of the market

¹⁹⁴ In this explanation is possible to see the ‘Marxist influence’ in the discourse.

For example, those who do not produce nor buy nor sell modern merchandise get in their way, or those who rebel against that order. And they despise those who are of no use to them. That is why the indigenous get in the way of neoliberal capitalism, and that is why they despise them and want to eliminate them

Then, in short, the capitalism of global neoliberalism is based on exploitation, plunder, contempt and repression of those who refuse. The same as before, but now globalized, worldwide

This is a great example of what Laclau considers in regard to establishing an equivalence of the demands of the excluded and elaborating a common language (2004). I take the main ideas from these paragraphs to find the discursive logics. Capitalism and neoliberalism become the negative nodal points to the Zapatista discourse on resistance and being rebels. The argument starts with the systemic or social order that works through a strong division between two groups. The relations (economic) between these groups are characterised by an uneven configuration, and there are constant patterns (exploitation and consumption) that reproduce this order. These are the dominant social, political and economic logics from which the element of heterogeneity finds its position within a counter-hegemonic move. The social field is divided, and the account of social objectivity develops from an antagonist perspective. In this way, the Zapatista project finds its position with the groups that have been on the side of the ‘exploited, repressed, and marginalised’. For instance, the negation of their ‘rebel identity’ is noted in this expression: “*They repress or separate anyone who doesn’t obey so that his rebellious ideas aren’t passed on to others*”. Before, this systemic critique did not include as much detail. The Zapatista identity is openly placed in negative terms against this system. In this last Declaration, the Mexican government, and “the great capitalists” are recognised as the antagonist-other. The latter reference is related to the idea of ‘imperialism and intervention’ embodied by the United States and its role in the current capitalist system.

The next point is the current ‘neoliberal world’. Having this reference, the discourse exposes the conditions that affect the field. The neoliberal conditions are discursively articulated to signifiers that imply the expansion, colonisation and different ways of domination (“economic, political, military and cultural plans”). This scenario brings other points of entry for the Zapatista vision of social objectivity. The conditions of the system imply that human and natural resources are affected. The discourse draws a parallel between neoliberal globalisation and war. The necessary expansion and subsequent insertion of this system imply a war of conquest for the national and local spheres. In this context, ‘resistance and rebellion’ are the actions demanded, and these actions also construct the Zapatista identity. The “war of conquest of the entire world” finds its limits with the indigenous population that stand against this war and resist. In

the first sentence of this Declaration, the movement consider themselves as “dignified and rebel”.

These references also frame the common identity referred in all of the Declarations. As I mentioned previously, different social groups were addressed in the case of Mexico; in this Sixth Declaration, the same logic applies to the international perspective. All the groups mentioned in the common identity are considered as part of the ‘resistance and rebellion’. It follows a particular-universal logic in which the primary identity (indigenous) relates to and includes many forms of identification in different layers. The end of this section (“How We See the World”) reads as follows,

And so, as there is a neoliberal globalization, there is a globalization of rebellion

I consider that, in this statement, it is possible to see the relation of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity from a multilevel perspective. In the account of the Zapatistas’ social objectivity, an element (capitalist, neoliberals, the Mexican government) that negates and oppresses many social groups exerts dominance. In this case, the dominance includes many forms of organising the social field. Hegemony, in the Gramscian sense, would include those social or cultural aspects that are not directly imposed but rather ‘presented’ as generalised practices. In this logic, this implies the consumption of material and cultural products. As seen in the quotations, the Zapatista movement, as the element of heterogeneity, enters this social field and places its vision of social organisation and identity in complete opposition to this hegemonic or dominant position. This relates to discourse theory’s point that negativity is always constitutive. The element of heterogeneity represents all those demands that the dominant position has not fulfilled. Moreover, according to the Zapatista perspective, it is the system in itself the one is producing the injustices and repression in the social field. This systematic exclusion is the trigger that causes the rebellion, and, in this case, it implies a relation to antagonism.

In this case, it is in the expansionist and exploitative character of the system from which the group of disregarded appear and find their motive to resist. This counter-hegemonic positioning allows the Zapatista movement to engage with various social and political organisations in different social fields (Mexico and the world). I have pointed out before that the way the common identity is addressed implies an aspiration of hegemony. The idea of being the representative of the sovereign or the majority is inherent to the logic of a divided space. The Zapatista account tries to increase its presence through conveying the social demands of the most disempowered groups. One particularity included in the Sixth Declaration is that, for the first time, an ‘ideological’

reference openly appears. For example, EZLN called for a national program to include the following,

which will be clearly of the left, or anti-capitalist, or anti-neoliberal, or for justice, democracy and liberty for the Mexican people

In consideration of this last quote, I will comment on the ways ‘union’ appears in the discourse. The aim is to follow how this notion is presented from this disregarded position. I develop this point using the section “How We See Our Country Which is Mexico”. I consider that this quote perfectly reflects and resumes the spirit of this section,

So the neoliberals want to kill Mexico, our Mexican Patria.¹⁹⁵ And the political parties not only do not defend it, they are the first to put themselves at the service of foreigners, especially those from the United States, and they are the ones who are in charge of deceiving us, making us look the other way while everything is sold, and they are left with the money

The relevant part comes with “our Mexican Patria”. National identity is strongly used in all the Declarations of the Lacandon Jungle. As I explained in reference to the Third Declaration, the EZLN claimed to be its ‘protector’. In this case, the national interest is contrasted with the foreign intervention (the U.S.). The antagonist (neoliberals) that is damaging what unifies all the fields threatens the social field (Mexico). Even if the binary formation of ‘patriots and traitors’ is not fully displayed, the intent of the Zapatista movement is to underline which actor has more legitimacy in the social field. In all the Declarations, the references to Mexico’s colonial past and foreign interventions after its independence highlight the aspect of national sovereignty. This is clearly a post-colonialist demand that concerns the mistreatment of indigenous populations in all of the regions of Mexico. The discursive dynamics related to this topic make evident that by questioning whom the “Mexican Patria” actually is and represents, the dispute reaches a teleological dimension. In framing the situation in such a serious way, the whole identity and account of social objectivity is essentialised. Rebellion is justified to defend the nation. This necessarily implies a hierarchical arrangement of ‘patriots versus traitors’.

The next photo¹⁹⁶ shows how these discursive references and expressions appear in the daily activities within the Zapatista territories. Murals and wall paintings are

¹⁹⁵ The expression in Spanish is *Patria Mexicana* (Mexican motherhood).

¹⁹⁶ The photo is courtesy of Malin Jönsson. This school is in the Caracol of Oventic (Zapatista community).

exceptional features in the communicative actions of this movement. This is the “Zapatista autonomous and rebel primary school” (as it reads in the middle of the wall) in Oventic. On the left side of the two Zapatista snails¹⁹⁷, it reads in blue letters, “La Educación Escolar no es ajena a las luchas del pueblo” (Schooling is not alien to the people’s struggle). On the other side it says, “Aquí se enseña aprendiendo y se educa produciendo” (Here we teach by learning and we educate producing).¹⁹⁸



(2)

In red letters below the snails, it reads, “Aquí se fomenta el amor a la patria Mexicana y a la conciencia de la solidaridad internacional con todos los pueblos del mundo” (Love for Mexico and the international solidarity with people from all over the world is promoted in this land). The two snails wearing the characteristic bandana and balaclava represent a female-male pair as suggested by the breads of the one on the right that is reading a book in which “La Revolución” appears. The message on this wall shows the patriotic feature of the movement together with a universal stance when “people from all over the world” are being considered as part of their account of social objectivity.

Moving to the fifth section of the Declaration, an interesting point is the call for regional cooperation at the level that concerns the Zapatistas. In this way, the ‘Latin American’ identity is framed in terms of resistance and communion among groups. Different countries are mentioned, thus highlighting local conditions and groups. This part also includes a reference to the ‘North Americans’, meaning the United States,

¹⁹⁷ I give more details of the figure of the snail in the second part.

¹⁹⁸ My translation.

And we want to tell the North American people that we know that the bad governments which you have and which spread harm throughout the world is one thing – and those North Americans who struggle in their country, and who are in solidarity with the struggles of other countries, are a very different thing

Afterwards, the brothers and sisters of ‘Social Europe’, Africa, Asia and Oceania are also addressed. This is most noteworthy statement in this section,

And we want to tell the world that we want to make you large, so large that all those worlds will fit, those worlds which are resisting because they want to destroy the neoliberals and because they simply cannot stop fighting for humanity

The sixth section has details about actions and plans taking place at the national and international levels. The actions and cooperation consider that the only possibility is to develop them with “organisations of the left” that resist neoliberal globalisation at the national and international levels. The Sixth Declaration closes with calls to organise and participate according to the ideals and aims of all those groups that find common points with the Zapatistas. The references to the snail and to ‘the peoples of other parts of the world’ are a bridge to connect to the second part of this setting of heterogeneity.

8.3 Zapatismo, snails, and the world(s)

Brothers and Sisters: Many words walk in the world. Many worlds are made. Many worlds are made for us... In the world we want everyone fits. In the world we want many worlds to fit

This statement is from the Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, wherein the world is addressed with one of the most famous phrases used by the Zapatistas. In this second part, the analytical concern is on the links between the Zapatista’s accounts of social objectivity and the discursive representation of the world. The relevant matter is to understand how the projection of objectivity and identity takes place beyond their local context. Thus, this part shows the ways the element of heterogeneity relates to other levels and identities that are not primarily associated with it. For this, I use the two *Declarations of la Realidad*¹⁹⁹ and some visual material²⁰⁰ that exemplify different

¹⁹⁹ This was the name of a Zapatista territory. I give more explanations about the territorial arrangement of the communities in the next image.

²⁰⁰ The material presented in this section is related to the Zapatista movement. This means that some works are made by supporters.

aspects of the accounts of objectivity. It is necessary to quote at length to show this actor's multilevel perspective on articulating identity and discourse.

In 1995, the EZLN and other organisations arranged the *Plebiscite for Peace and Democracy*. As result of this, the Zapatistas launched three initiatives. One is considered the arrangement of "an intercontinental dialogue in opposition to neoliberalism". This dialogue was convened in the *First Declaration of La Realidad for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism*²⁰¹ (January 1996). The main objective was the arrangement of the *First Intercontinental Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism*²⁰² (August 1996). The text of the Fourth Declaration explains that this event considered a worldwide participation, including preliminary assemblies in five continents.²⁰³ I already provided some comments regarding the views on neoliberalism. However, with the content of this Fourth Declaration, I can offer more details on the articulation involved. I consider that the relevant aspect of this articulation is the way the counter-hegemonic position is advanced. This Declaration immediately develops a strong critical stance depicting a vision of world order on these terms,

To the people of the world:

Brothers and Sisters:

During the last years, the power of money has presented a new mask over its criminal face. Above borders, no matter race or color²⁰⁴, the Power of money humiliates dignities, insults honesties and assassinates hopes. Re-named as "Neoliberalism", the historic crime in the concentration of privileges, wealth and impunities, democratizes misery and hopelessness.

A new world war is waged, but now against the entire humanity. As in all world wars, what is being sought is a new distribution of the world. By the name of "globalization" they call this modern war which assassinates and forgets. The new distribution of the world consists in concentrating power in power and misery in misery.

The new distribution of the world excludes "minorities". The indigenous, youth, women, homosexuals, lesbians, people of color, immigrants, workers, peasants; the majority who make up the world basements are presented, for power, as disposable. The new distribution of the world excludes the majorities...The new distribution of the world destroys humanity.

²⁰¹ This was signed by *Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos*.

²⁰² The one organised in Chiapas had four thematic parts addressing the ways to resist the economic, political, social and cultural aspects of neoliberalism.

²⁰³ The preparatory assemblies were arranged in April 1996. These are the places considered for the Gatherings: Berlin (Europe), La Realidad Chiapas (America), Tokyo (Asia), Sydney (Oceania), and Africa was not defined.

²⁰⁴ This refers to 'skin colour'.

The substantial parts in these quotes are the ways the elements of heterogeneity are positioned against the dominant or hegemonic structure. 'Neoliberalism' is seen as the dominant way of arranging relations and as a concentration of power acting against the other groups at different social levels. It is worth noticing that, at this time, there is no reference to a specific country. In this way, the 'locality' of the heterogeneous element transcends to other social fields and actors. This power is depicted as a way of excluding the social groups enlisted. Part of this idea is presented with the contradictions that this current way of social configuration conveys. The paradoxical situation is that the 'minorities' are the majority of groups affected. It can be argued that all the groups named are those heterogeneous elements that have been neglected in their immediate situation.

In contrast to the grim one presented, an alternative option is sketched. The element of heterogeneity finds a possibility proposing other ways to arrange the social relations. This is expressed in this way,

Against the international of terror representing neoliberalism, we must raise the international of hope. "Hope, above borders, languages, colors, cultures, sexes, strategies, and thoughts, of all those who prefer humanity alive

The following step is to form a chain of identity tracing points of convergence,

To all who struggle for human values of democracy, liberty and justice.

To all individuals, groups, collectives, movements, social, civic and political organisations, neighborhood associations, cooperatives, all the lefts known and to be known; non-governmental organisations, groups in solidarity with struggles of the world people, bands, tribes, intellectuals, indigenous people, students, musicians, workers, artists, teachers, peasants, cultural groups, youth movements, alternative communication media, ecologists, tenants, lesbians, homosexuals, feminists, pacifists.

To all human beings without a home, without land, without work, without food, without health, without education, without freedom, without justice, without independence, without democracy, without peace, without tomorrow.

The way of lining up all of these social groups (or identities, in discourse theory terms) side-by-side is similar to the chain of difference presented in the Mexican case. I am considering difference because it is not placed against other negative identity, thus, in my understanding, there is no equivalence in this case. In addition, it is worth to note that the historic demands listed in the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle are associated with these identities.

To illustrate the vision of the world supported by the Zapatistas, I present the following illustration that commemorates the ninth anniversary of the "Caracoles and

Juntas de Buen Gobierno” (Good Governance Councils 2012). It features a simple composition of elements, but all of the elements help to visualise the Zapatista vision. Having the map of the world as a background and stage, five multicolour snails and the list of historic demands (adding communication and culture) are the focal point of the image. The rhetorical organisation of the elements underlines a universal logic with the map and the demands.



(3)

The symbolic reference of the piece is the ‘caracoles’ (Spanish plural name for ‘snail’) that seem to be on the move in ‘steady procession’ over a dotted-line circle. I interpret this as a cyclical trajectory of the snails. The figure of the snail has diverse meaningful aspects in the Zapatista world. In this image, the snails represent the number of territories or autonomous regions called *caracoles*.²⁰⁵ The Caracoles and the Good

²⁰⁵ These are the official names: Caracol “Madre de los caracoles del mar de nuestros sueños” (known as La Realidad), Caracol “Torbellino de nuestras palabras” (Morelia), Caracol “Resistencia hacia un nuevo amanecer” (La Garrucha), Caracol “El caracol que habla para todos” (Roberto Barrios), Caracol “Resistencia y rebeldía por la humanidad” (Oventik).

Governance Councils²⁰⁶ can be seen as institutions but have different functions.²⁰⁷ Caracoles are a space where indigenous communities and external actors interact at different levels (Martínez Espinoza, 2006: 223-4).

Beyond this immediate context, in the discursive analysis, the relevant matter in these images is the articulation of signifiers and the conformation of identity in relation to this figure. Part of the symbolism merges with the different layers of identities and the current demands that the Zapatista account of objectivity enacts. The demands work as the signifiers that ground this account. The *caracol* carries the symbolism of the peoples' Mayan heritage. Part of this meaning is elucidated in the first chapter of the text *Chiapas: la Treceava Estela*.²⁰⁸ In this text, the reference to the caracol explains the appreciation that the Mayas have for the figure of the snail. This is considered to represent a 'movement' in the heart but also around the world. The snail was used to call the people for gathering and for hearing the distant voices. The Zapatista understanding of the world is paralleled to the spiral shape of the shell. The outer ring would be the international moving to the inner core with the levels of the national, regional and local, and then finally arriving to "el Votán" (the guardian and people's heart). In these different levels, the Zapatista communities consider words such as 'globalisation', 'resistance', 'economy', 'city' and 'political situation'.

As previously explained, the caracol is a locus where a community is built. It is the place where the 'word rises'. In a wider and actual view, the symbol of the caracol is seen as a small community facing globalisation (Urban, 2007).²⁰⁹ Additionally, this shape is regarded as representing the ways the Zapatista movement 'does' politics and perceives history. The caracoles and the councils are a way of organising and doing politics but are opposed to state politics. These entities maintain tradition and identity. The representatives in charge are in constant rotation, and the practices follow the societal dialogue (Bahn, 2009: 550-1). This is what the illustration includes: the movement in cycles and rotation, in contrast with a linear understanding of time and politics. This image also depicts the universal standpoint included in this account

²⁰⁶ The Council is a body conformed by elected delegates that represent the *Municipios Autónomos Rebeldes Zapatista* (MAREZ (Spanish acronym) Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities). See: Martínez Espinoza, 2006.

²⁰⁷ Each Caracol has a Council and they have their own services and ways of organising legal and social issues. The Councils take care of the political processes within the communities. For a detailed explanation of daily activities, see: *Chiapas la resistencia* by Gloria Muñoz Ramírez. This was published in different articles in the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada*. This is the link of the English translation: <https://dorsetchiapassolidarity.wordpress.com/reports-from-the-5-caracoles/> Accessed 18.01.2018.

²⁰⁸ This is written by *Sub-comandante Marcos*.

²⁰⁹ For a semiotic analysis of the snail see: Urban, 2007.

The following photo²¹⁰ illustrates the presence of these elements in the Zapatista communities. On the left, the red and black star has the Mayan numbers on each point (one dot represents one, and the bar five). In the middle of the star, the figure of a snail shell features the phrase “Educación liberadora” (education that liberates).



(4)

On the green wall, the text written reads, in Spanish, as, “En las Escuelas Autónomas Zapatistas se educa a la infancia en el espíritu y concepción colectivo del mundo” (In the Autonomous Zapatista schools, the children are educated within the spirit and collective understanding of the world). And, on the other side, the following statement appears: “Nuestra filosofía es el ser humano como parte de la Naturaleza” (Our philosophy views the human being as part of the Nature).²¹¹ The first phrase stresses the notion of collectivity and the universal commitment of the vision. The star combines the Zapatista identity with the Mayan roots of the population. Both references are merged, thus presenting the social and political project that has been developing in the communities with the origin of the peoples. The indigeneity associated with the Zapatistas combines the ‘old traditional’ forms of social and cultural arrangement with communal democratic practices (Rabasa, 2010: 8).

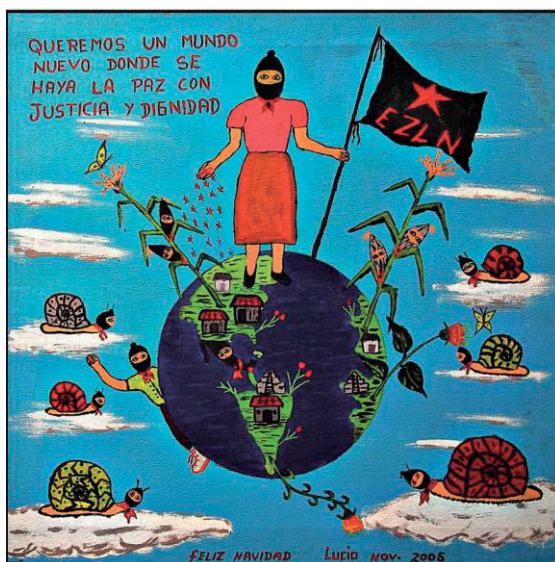
To conclude with the First Declaration of La Realidad, the last paragraph reads,

²¹⁰ Photo courtesy of Malin Jönsson. This building is in the Caracol of Oventic. (Zapatista community).

²¹¹ My translation.

Brothers and Sisters: Humanity lives in the chest of us...It is not necessary to conquer the world. It is sufficient with making it new. Us. Today. Democracy! Liberty! Justice!

The next painting depicts the demand of a ‘new world’.



(5)

The text reads, in Spanish, “Queremos un mundo nuevo donde se haya la paz con justicia y dignidad” (We want a new world in which peace is founded with justice and dignity).²¹² The main focal point is the Zapatista woman standing over the world and spreading the seeds of renovation. This is the main issue of the rhetorical organisation. The snails in the sky observe the woman. These are red stars from which a corn plant has grown with two Zapatista cobs of corn. These plants grow in America and other parts of the world. In reference to this continent, the Mexican territory is formed with one Zapatista face that wears a balaclava. Political frontiers do not separate the land depicted. One construction as a pyramid stands together with the type of house used nowadays. This piece again shows the combination of the Mayan legacy with the current organisation of the indigenous communities. The idea of renovation or a new world associates the roots of the movement with the actual account of social objectivity. With the previous paragraph quoted and this image, it is possible to focus on the idea of the aesthetic turn, in that the symbolism of the image and the Zapatista movement’s words to convey their views of world politics need another frame of reading. If “aesthetics,

²¹² My translation.

politics and ethics” are intertwined (Bleiker, 2009: 10), these both examples expose the complexities at stake.

To finish the analysis of this chapter, the last pieces reviewed are the *Second Declaration of La Realidad* and some images that illustrate it. This Declaration was released at the conclusion of the First Intercontinental Encounter. The closing words of the encounter are the preamble of this Declaration. It starts,

Brothers and sisters of the whole world: Brothers and sisters of Africa, America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.

Brothers and sisters attending the First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism: Welcome to the Zapatista R/reality. Welcome to this territory in struggle for humanity. Welcome to this territory in rebellion against neoliberalism

Afterwards comes the list of the 40 countries and other representations²¹³ that participated in the Encounter. The text combines emotional evocations of hope and with gloomy and dramatic references of the consequences of neoliberalism. The main issues in this Declaration were the call for organising the ‘Second Intercontinental Encounter’ and the ‘Intercontinental Consultation for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism’.²¹⁴ As in other Declarations, the account of objectivity describes a split setting of tragedy or hope. In this way, the former is presented,

The lie of unipolarity and internationalisation turns itself into a nightmare of war, a fragmented war, again and again, so many times that nations are pulverised. In this world that the Power is globalizing in order to get around the obstacles to its war of conquest

It is not possible for neoliberalism to become the world's reality without the argument of death served up by institutional and private armies

The more neoliberalism advances as a global system, the more numerous grow the weapons and the ranks of the armies and national police. The numbers of the imprisoned, the disappeared, and the assassinated in different countries also grows

A world war: the most brutal, the most complete, the most universal, the most effective

Each country, each city, each rural area, each house, each person, everything is a large or small battleground. On the one side is neoliberalism with all its repressive power and all its machinery of death; on the other side is the human being

In this part, the antagonist element is defined categorically, and the discourse includes dramatic passages. If neoliberalism is taken as a negative nodal point, these paragraphs

²¹³ It also included representatives of Kurdistan and the Basque Country.

²¹⁴ The “Second Intercontinental Encounter” was in Spain (1997). The consultation was planned for December 1996, but it was not organised.

illustrate the articulation of strong signifiers such as ‘war’, ‘repressive power’ and ‘machinery of death’. The references to “unipolarity and internationalisation” add a new dimension to the ways the Zapatistas critically engage in the political situation at this level. This critical positioning enables the heterogeneous element to find a legitimate place to make a proposition. In contrast to the antagonist elements, one of the following paragraphs reads,

A world made of many worlds found itself these days in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast. A world of all the worlds that rebel and resist the Power, a world of all the worlds that inhabit this world opposing cynicism, a world that struggles for humanity and against neoliberalism. This was the world that we lived these days; this is the world that we found here

The next drawing makes this alternative scenario visible. I explained before that this type of visual is more interesting than the ‘real’ events depicted. This is because, in my opinion, the use of symbolic elements makes the composition of the image more creative and richer. This piece, “otro mundo es posible” (a different world is possible) is a heavily decorated picture of the world that gives an account of the multiplicity that the Zapatismo endorse. The astral composition of the background merges with the natural and human world. Rhetorically, the visual idea of unity establishes a relation among the elements, as all appear as coexisting in balance.



(6)

The multi-ethnic chain represents in itself the conception of unity through multiplicity. We can see the ‘worlds within the world’. The (cultural) difference among the persons (clothing) is noted, but this is the feature that provides the possibility of this union. The circle resembles an eye figure but also the spiral of the shell representing “el Votán”. At the bottom, it reads, “un mundo donde quepan otros mundos” (a world where many worlds fit). The figure of the snail can be seen in the two stars and the moon placed at the corners. Circularity is the main form in which all the elements are placed. This again shows part of the understanding that guide this vision of the world. This foundational depiction appears in the two previous chapters within the logics and context that each scenario entails. Under the Derridean frame, this is ‘pure presence’ and the logocentric reference is, literally, the ‘fullness of the union’.

Concerning the discursive dynamics and the social demands at stake, this piece conveys a clear message that the Zapatismo have advocated. Firstly, the people depicted point to the vindication of indigenous people around the world. Considered as ‘minorities’, the EZLN discourse aims for the recognition of indigenous peoples as the original habitants. This also implies that their political rights, such as autonomy and self-determination, must be respected regardless of their geographical circumstance. The strong presence of the natural world in the drawing presents the idea of a balanced relation between nature and humans. This is contrary to the exploitative character of a capitalist way of production and consumption. The message of ecologic balance is reinforced with the lack of urban or industrial places.

Continuing with the text of the Declaration, the closing remarks show the division of the field in which the discourse is constructed. Specifically, in this part, the conformation of identity is significant. I quote at length to show this feature,

Brothers and sisters of Africa, Asia, America, Europe, and Oceania:

Considering that we are:

Against the international order of death, against the globalization of war and armaments.

Against dictatorships, against authoritarianism, against repression.

Against the politics of economic liberalisation, against poverty, against corruption.

Against patriarchy, against xenophobia, against discrimination, against racism, against crime, against the destruction of the environment.

Against slavery, against intolerance, against injustice.

Against neoliberalism.

Considering that we are:

For the international order of hope, for a new, just, and dignified peace.

For a new politics, for democracy, for political liberties.

For justice, for life, and dignified work.

For civil society, for full rights for women in every aspect, for the respect of elders, youth, and children, for the defence and protection of the environment.

For intelligence, for culture, for education, for truth.

For liberty, for tolerance, for inclusion, for having memory.

For humanity

In the first part, the duality is settled by negating all those elements that are considered as external to the account of objectivity and identity. As previously noted, the negative nodal point of 'neoliberalism' is articulated with all kinds of detrimental situations. This is the point of antagonism in which the alternative social configuration finds the first conditions of possibility. While negating all those features mentioned (being against authoritarianism, injustice, etc.), the alternative discourse constructs a more inclusive social configuration. I contend that this is another aspect of multiplicity that this vision has. This may be regarded as the way the element of heterogeneity contends for a hegemonic position. The discursive lines are extended, advocating for "full rights for women in every aspect", "intelligence", "truth and for having memory" and rejecting "patriarchy", "xenophobia", "slavery" and "intolerance". The chain of equivalence is clearly noted, and the contrasting spirit of both sections perfectly illustrates the interrelation of hegemony and antagonism. I consider that, in terms of the whole Zapatista discourse, the expression "a world where many worlds fit" works as a myth in the sense that it grounds a universal stance. The first part of the quotation shows how the factor of antagonism appears as constitutive and addresses the boundaries that make the inclusions and exclusions.

The concluding remarks of *La Declaración de la Realidad* are the 'ground' to present the last pieces for analysis,

This we declare:

To speak and to listen for humanity and against neoliberalism.

To resist and struggle for humanity and against neoliberalism.

For the whole world: Democracy! Liberty! Justice!

From whatever reality of whichever continent!"

These lines comprise, in my view, all the core points of this account of social objectivity. The first sentence refers to what was commented on in the explanation of the caracol: The word is privileged in a collective perspective. The second places the rebel identity of the movement but most significantly the struggle of the indigenous peoples. The third are those foundations that support the movement. And, finally, the multiplicity of having many ‘understandings and realities’ is declared.

To close this chapter, I want to illustrate these views with three images that gracefully reflect the *worlds* of the *Zapatistas*. The next painting has some well-known symbolic elements: the snails, the Zapatista faces with balaclavas and the red bandanas. It also includes a novel element of identity. All the elements maintain a ‘functional’ relation that connects many relevant aspects of the movement’s identity and visions. The rhetorical organisation of the first piece clarifies the cosmogonic perspective linked to the human one. The planetary perspective of the painting recreates the scope and depth of the social and political visions of the movement. This spatial view links and reinforces the aspect of universality that appeared in the Zapatistas’ discourse. The focal point of the image is the Zapatista woman lying down on the moon and ‘holding’ the planet earth with one hand.



(7)

The five *caracoles* are walking the earth ‘again’ while the Zapatista-faced sun, the planets and a communications satellite are staring at the scene. The points that I want to highlight about subjectivity are the presence of women in the visual discourse and, with this painting, the children. Even though it is difficult to notice at first glance, there is a child (wearing a balaclava) sitting on the lap of the woman. The message under²¹⁵ the child reads, “Otro mundo es posible, Lucha!” (“Another world is possible, Fight!”). The rhetorical organisation of these figures shows that the Zapatismo have resisted, and the new generations are already growing. The child naturally adds to the visuality the issues of future, time and the desired new world. At the bottom, it reads, “We want a world where many worlds fit”. In reference to the women presence, in the majority of wall paintings or drawings that I reviewed, the depiction of women is a main feature of the Zapatista visual discourse. This situation reflects the active and decisive role that women have had in the movement.²¹⁶ From the analytical perspective of this work, the presence of women²¹⁷ shows that everyone is regarded as an active and valuable member of the community.

The next poster is related to the calls against neoliberalism. The ‘rebel identity’ is the central topic from which the calls are based. This poster promoted the *1er Festival Mundial de las Resistencias y las Rebeldías*,²¹⁸ as written on the left side (First World Festival for Resistance and Rebellion).²¹⁹ The colours of the rainbow are the background in which the drawing of world is the main pictorial reference. The American continent is the main geographical reference, but the key focal point is the phrase “contra el capitalismo” (against capitalism) and the figure of a dog wearing the characteristic Zapatista balaclava and bandana and urinating over the letter ‘c’ and ‘a’ of capitalism.

²¹⁵ Unfortunately, because of the quality and size of the digitalised version this message is unclear.

²¹⁶ In other social movements or guerrillas in Latin America the presence of women was very marginal. For instance, with the EZLN, the *Women’s Revolutionary Law* was announced on the same day of the uprising in 1994. The law granted ten rights for the women of the movement. For the English translation of the law see: <http://struggle.ws/mexico/ezln/womlaw.html> Accessed: 26.09.2018.

²¹⁷ For an analysis of the women’s participation and struggles, see: Harvey and Halverson (2004) and for the movement and the feminist perspective, see: Vuorisalo-Tiitinen, 2011.

²¹⁸ This festival was organised in different towns and cities in Mexico between December 2014 and January 2015. I want to mention that I found this poster in the streets of Mexico City. It was some days after the festival took place. It was already behind other classified ads and was a bit broken and wet.

²¹⁹ The text in Spanish says “resistencias and rebeldías” which imply a plural meaning or different ways of resistances and being rebel. For all the information (only in Spanish) see: <http://radiozapatista.org/?tag=festival-de-las-resistencias>. Accessed: 28.09.2018.

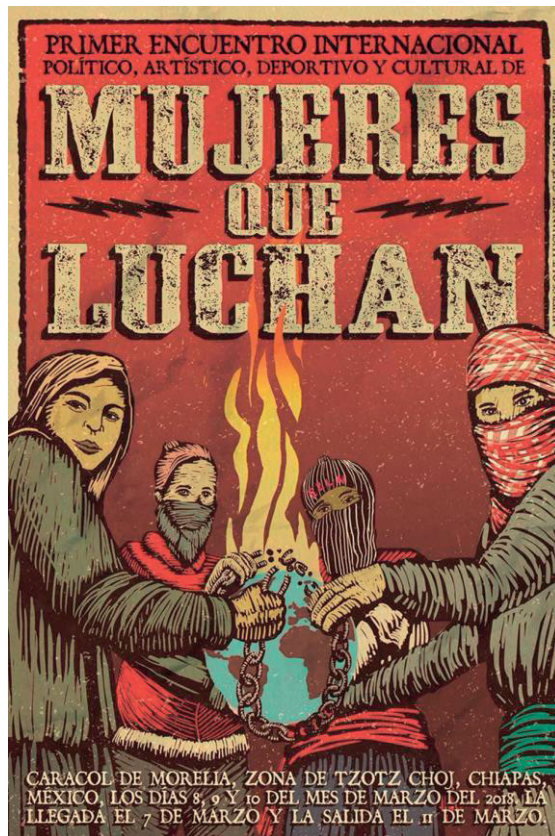
The American continent is presented without borders and the land is covered by figures in a red background. These figures are commonly found on the bandanas EZLN members often use to cover their faces. The rest of the text is information about the festival's activities.



(8)

This colourful vision of the world shows the connection between the rebel and the anti-capitalist identities of the movement. The visual rhetorical composition puts forward the idea of a union without political borders. This also relates to the name of the festival, which refers to resisting and rebelling worldwide. The festival's motto read as, "Donde los de arriba destruyen, los de abajo reconstruimos" (Where the ones at the top destroy, the ones at the bottom build again). The message emphasises the sharp distinction that characterises the Zapatista vision with the current hegemonic socio-political and economic system.

The last piece is from one of the most recent activities²²⁰ the movement organised: the *First International Gathering of Politics, Art, Sport, and Culture for Women in Struggle* ²²¹ (as it reads in Spanish at the top of the poster).



(9)

The focal point is shared with the expression “mujeres que luchan” (women in struggle) and the four women liberating the ‘world in flames’. The composition and rhetoric bring the shared action and commitment of women striving and resisting from a disregarded position. The composition includes women breaking what can be considered as the chains of oppression. This symbolism corresponds with the activities included in the

²²⁰ In addition to the pictorial content, I included this piece to show that the Zapatista movement is active and organising international events. The encounter was held on 8th -10th March 2018.

²²¹ For the opening speech see: <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2018/03/26/zapatista-womens-opening-address-at-the-first-international-gathering-of-politics-art-sport-and-culture-for-women-in-struggle/> Accessed: 15.08.2018.

gathering, which combines the concern of gender inequality with the promotion of a wider social and political agenda, as stated in the name of the event. The covered faces represent the rebel identity that characterises the groups that are included in the Zapatistas' account of gender and social struggles. The issue of difference shows the ethnical, social and cultural background²²² of the four women that is united by sharing the disregarded position and the will to radically change this world. I consider that this is the perfect image to portray the contextualisation of heterogeneity. As it has been possible to follow in the images and Declarations, the Zapatista identity uses exclusion as bedrock for their articulation of discourse and identity. My reading of these last two posters is that the ones disregarded are actually the forgotten 'roots' of the world. In the previous image, these four women, in their multiplicity, embody the expression "los de abajo" (the ones at the bottom). This is the depiction of the persons that make the margins and that make the world from 'below', as the Zapatistas say.

8.4 Conclusion: The snail and its (slow) trajectory around the centre

The analysis in this setting provided a discursive outline for how the 'rebel dignity' broke through, and with this irruption, the limits of the system were exposed. This situation helps to see Laclau's idea about the constitutive feature of heterogeneity. As I explained, I regard the heterogeneous element as representing the limit but having a double feature of being an insider and an outsider at once. It is an element that is disregarded but marks the limits of the system and/or social space. In this sense, I proposed the setting of heterogeneity by considering that the social demands or groups, that have been neglected or excluded, appear into the space of representation and dislocates the stability. I followed the argument that there are other types of exclusion and those excluded are not necessarily regarded as antagonist. This argument was partially imprecise, because the analysis showed that there is also a degree of antagonism. The element of heterogeneity provided valuable insights about the discursive dynamics and identity. Comparing with the configuration of the other two settings, the logic of difference and equivalence revealed the ways this actor expressed and influenced the hegemonic account of social objectivity with an alternative counter-hegemonic view.

The first point I want to underline is one feature in the context in which the element of heterogeneity broke through. This feature is that the hegemonic perspective (political

²²² This is the only image that I found with the interaction of a Zapatista member (second from right to left) with other persons.

system/government of Mexico) governing the social field (Mexico) did not consider that any further social demand required a structural change. This means that all population in general (Mexicans) and social groups in particular (indigenous communities, peasants) were part of the common social demands. Based on my understanding, all of these are the 'homogenous' and hegemonic elements confirming the status quo. The social deprivation of a certain population was recognised; nonetheless, the government managed this situation in an institutional way.²²³ My point is that for the established authority, the element of heterogeneity did not represent a point of dislocation or pure antagonism. Moreover, it was a further development of the economic policies (privatisation of public companies, NAFTA negotiation and implementation, changes in the constitution about land ownership²²⁴) that tried to expand and consolidate the social and political order.

This is the background from which the element of heterogeneity deems that the system is incapable of attending to their social demands and that it has been historically overlooked. Thus, this element proposes an alternative project—namely, a different vision of social objectivity. In this case, the moment of irruption was a declaration of war. There was an armed confrontation for a short period and the situation developed to other stages.²²⁵ The issue that I want to explain is that the element of heterogeneity may dislocate the social field in different ways according to the internal context of the field. I am not equating the way the EZLN irrupted as the only way a disregarded group can organise or challenge the system. It may have the violent aspect (e.g. permanent armed confrontation, guerrillas) followed by political measures (cease-fire, negotiation), or it may start with social mobilisations and find transitional development within the political order (voting, change of laws).

In any circumstance, the element of heterogeneity will engage with the dynamics of antagonism and hegemony. The social configuration that this conceptual setting explored has significant issues. The relevant part for my analysis is how the account of social objectivity develops in respect to the logics of equivalence and difference in this context. The discursive dynamics included the sharp division of the social field vis-à-vis the antagonist-other. This implied that the political field was divided and contested. The initial stage included the confrontation of visions of objectivity. In the case presented with the EZLN, the antagonist-other is the one that can be regarded as the hegemonic actor (Mexican government).

²²³ I refer to assistance programs, subsidies, financial support, etc.

²²⁴ The article 27 of the Mexican Constitution was changed in 1992.

²²⁵ These were commented on the presentation of the Declarations.

From this point, I focus on the issue of identity to elaborate the general conclusions. If we follow the argument that the heterogeneous element develops from a disregarded position, the first visible strategy is to recognise an antagonist counterpart to establish its own position. It is from this position that the account of social objectivity (social demands) and identity enacted finds visibility. Otherwise stated, the social field is divided between 'us and them'. In the formation and development of the identity, the matter of legitimacy is truly relevant. This can be tracked by following the binaries that appeared at different points. In general, the elements were related to oppositions such as majority/minority, included/excluded and powerful/powerless. The analysis exhibited the link between the mobilisation of an identity and the discursive ways to legitimise it. The first way the EZLN disputed the legitimacy over the social field is by dividing it. For instance, the binary of 'patriots/traitors' moves hand in hand with the 'anti-neoliberals/neoliberals' duplet. In this context, the discourse expropriated the Mexican motherland from the government. The current political institutions were represented as the ones who are selling 'the motherland'; the antagonist side comprises the traitors that do not care about the population. In this example, the antagonist-other is the figure of the 'bad government' or the political system and authority embodied in different institutions, such as the federal, state and local government; political parties at the national level; and neoliberalism or imperialism at the world level. The discursive analysis exposed the interesting point that the Zapatista discourse developed as a result of including all these 'negative signifiers' to legitimise their alternative worldview.

The indigenous identity is the grounding feature of the movement. The EZLN obtains an undisputed point of legitimacy when the thought about 'We are the original habitants, the ones who has been disregarded for 500 years' is recalled. In the way this identity is essentialised, the sovereign or "original habitants" shift to the Zapatista side and increase the support for their account of objectivity. The return to what entails the essence of Mexico can be regarded as a strategy of resistance (Smith, 1994:176). In addition to this, I highlighted the different 'layers' and reference points that articulate the 'Zapatista identity'. From my perspective, the most noteworthy feature is the way these layers and points are tied up together in a multi-level way. With the indigenous reference as a core identity, the 'Mexican' layer is truly important. The patriotic aspect within the Zapatismo has been firmly stressed since the beginning of the movement. In this sense, the dislocation that the EZLN brought still had a common point of identification with the rest of the Mexican society. For example, the Mexican flag is an element used constantly; and, as it reads on the walls of the school (image 2), belonging to Mexico is supported and not questioned with calls for secession or independence. In each of the Declarations presented, all social groups were demanded to enforce national

unity. It can be considered that 'Mexico' became the empty signifier, as the Zapatista version challenged 'the modern neoliberal version'. As in Chapter 7, it can be seen that the meaning of one signifier is contested by two sides makes what discourse theory considers as a floating signifier. In this case, the meaning invested in the signifier 'Mexico' shows how the identity of the signifier is contingent.

As with any other identity, the complex and relational character of this identity was illustrated through the images. These included a mix of symbolic elements with political and social demands, and ultimately declared a whole cosmovision as well. The snail and the shell symbolise time and the Mayan past. The snails also represent current practices of community building and governance. Nevertheless, visually speaking, I contend that the 'rebel face' is the most notorious feature in the identity projected to the world. The 'Zapatista face' in the black *pasamontaña* (balaclava) with the knitted red star defines the 'Zapatista being'. It protects, in every sense, and shows the rebellious spirit. In the images, the dove, the persons, the snails and even the dog urinating on capitalism are wearing this. The majority of actions promoted are in reference to 'the rebel' orientation of the movement, which turns to be another very visible layer that defines the movement. Their whole position of being a rebel, of being the 'ones at the bottom', is assumed and projected collectively. The legitimacy of the movement is firmly attached to this positioning.

Hence, the aspect of legitimacy crosses the line of hegemony, universality and particularity. In this case presented, the point is not to reduce the discussion to a binary of majority/minority or to consider power resources as a defining feature. Naturally, both sides, the Mexican government and Zapatistas, stand in complete opposition. One side is legally constituted and elected, while the other is the defiant rebel movement. The issue that I want to bring is the logic of representing the majority of the social field. Discursively, both sides share the same logic, and this is what is relevant for my analysis. The political system or the neoliberal project in Mexico never declared any social group excluded *per se*. It works with a base of universality that does not mean that, in practice, social exclusions do not take place within this system. The only excluded social elements would be the ones considered unlawful. In the case of the Zapatistas, the general call to all the groups constituting the social field establishes the counter-hegemonic stance. The rejected social elements are the ones supporting the federal government or a related authority. Undoubtedly, there is an exclusion that becomes constitutive. This is the terrain of the universal and the particular wherein hegemony and antagonism exclude and include 'something'. The EZLN, however, was capable of pushing their particularism forward by appealing to universal categories of the field (first the Mexican nation, and even with their calls for 'different worlds').

Their particular views on the revindication of the indigenous population at the local level grew into a wider movement that transcended to a global scale. This situation leads to the last aspect that I want to address: the hegemonic aspect of the heterogeneous element. For instance, Laclau argues that, “[A] globalized capitalism creates myriad points of rupture and antagonisms ecological crises, imbalance between different sectors of the economy, massive unemployment, and so on — and only an overdetermination of this antagonistic plurality can create global anti-capitalist subjects capable of carrying out a struggle worth the name” (2004: 150). Following Laclau’s words, the ‘anti-capitalist’ subjects constitute the heterogeneous elements. The way I see ‘overdetermination’ is related to the multiple worlds and realities considered in the overall vision the Zapatistas expressed. Therefore, this case implies that a counter-hegemonic position is constructed with many possibilities without hierarchies and without one (neoliberal) world excluding (and/or exploiting) the rest. I try to explain this position by referring to the logics of difference, equivalence and the nodal points that I identified in the discourse.

In the Declarations and in a couple of images, a remarkable aspect of the construction of identity and legitimacy is the example of the articulation of a chain of difference in the discourse. This chain included all of the social groups or identities named in the Declarations, and this strategic move, to a certain extent, gathered support for the Zapatista movement. The chain develops at two levels or social fields (national and international). This is a clear discursive movement that attempts to consolidate a hegemonic stance. In both levels, the difference traces a wide spectrum of identities in order to underpin the accounts of social objectivity promoted. However, equivalence also takes place even if it does not ‘appear’ at first glance. The EZLN’s common identity is constituted because the antagonist (the Mexican government and neoliberals) negates this identity. The element of antagonism is in both social fields, and in the Zapatista discourse, it is the same actor (“neoliberal elite”) even though it is not defined as such.

The irruption of the heterogeneous element required myths and foundations to develop their counter-hegemonic position. In my analysis, I considered that democracy, justice and liberty are the foundations from which the other demands follow. These foundations are the nodal points of the discourse, and they are presented as universal and necessary. They become a myth because they give certainty and present the claim that in the neoliberal model, democracy, justice and liberty are not fulfilled. However, the social field is divided, and these nodal points become floating signifiers because they are contested. This is a point the post-foundational stance notes. The ‘neoliberal side’ is able to claim that democracy, and liberties are central features (practical and grounding) of the account objectivity this perspective promotes.

My concluding remarks address the paradoxes or contradictions inside the Zapatistas' account of social objectivity. I find that the central issue is the exclusion/inclusion of the antagonist. For instance, in the Declarations of la Realidad, everything that neoliberalism represents is strongly rejected. Using their own expression, "All worlds fit in the world except the neoliberal world". The point that I want to underline is that there is no explanation of the ways to deal with the social element ('neoliberals') regarded as the antagonist. The unanswered question remains: Is it a matter of conversion or suppression?

The Second Declaration proposed "a new political relationship" of different groups ("socialism, capitalism social-democratic, liberalism, Christian-Democratic" were mentioned) in "a free and democratic space of political struggle". The ideas in this statement were not mentioned anymore. These ideas can be considered as a proposal of agonistic politics that matches the notion of multiplicity that is constantly expressed. Nevertheless, the discourse in the Declarations traces an antagonistic frontier against the neoliberals. This implies a contradiction, because I conclude that the way the Zapatista movement contends for hegemony is through multiplicity. However, the 'neoliberals' are not included in this multiplicity.

After the presentation of the first three Declarations, I posed a question regarding when to discuss the element of heterogeneity that becomes 'something else'. This is an interesting point in theoretical terms. If the proposition of the EZLN as an example of heterogeneity is accepted as valid, then the transition of a marginal position into a new situation needs to be explored. Based on my understanding, this issue is about the 'reaction of the system' or the way the social field assimilates or rejects what the element of heterogeneity represents. The primary point would be if the social demands are fulfilled in the terms they were presented in the beginning. In a context in which armed conflict is not present, then the demands are addressed via negotiation or even with a process of transformation (starting as 'opposition' and forming a new government). This situation would imply that the heterogeneous element is institutionalised and becomes a regular political force competing with the rest. In this case, the antagonistic dimension fades for other configurations (even an agonistic stance). However, my analysis has limitations concerning the setting referred and does not imply that other elements considered as heterogeneous relate in the same way to the existing social and political contexts.

The current state of the Zapatista movement involves different situations. The movement still confronts the Mexican political system but also maintains its influence and activities. It has not 'openly' competed for a hegemonic position recently but organises national and international events. They reject any form of political activity

through the institutionalised frame. In fact, the movement continue to implement their own ways of autonomous governance and participatory democracy in their territories and communities. It may be the case that the snail is moving forward, surely but slowly. If this is the case, the heterogeneous element will wait for the start of a new cycle and walk its trajectory. The trajectory, however, may not be a linear one; it may instead move around, letting the centre exist as an open space where different accounts of social objectivity coexist.

9 CONCLUSIONS

The echo of small distinction, the local and particular, reverberating in the echo of great distinction, the intercontinental and galactic. The echo that recognises the existence of the other and does not overpower or attempt to silence the other. The echo that takes its place and speaks its own voice and speaks the voice of the other.

Second Declaration of La Realidad

For me the starting point... is not multiplicity but failed unicity...it consists in finding in every identity the traces of its contingency – i.e. the presence (in a way to be specified) of something different from itself

Ernesto Laclau

In the Introduction, I expressed that my interest in this work was to follow different configurations of discourse and identity in their path to the centre. I made this allegory with contingency in mind and from the perspective that each setting exemplified a particular perspective of being at, or moving towards, the centre. The centre represented the establishment of hegemony. Consequently, in the first setting, the idea was that the hegemonic actor develops from the privileged positioning to the rest of the field. The following scenario implied two antagonistic sides clashing and trying to move to and control the centre. Finally, the ‘periphery’ was the starting point of a disregarded movement aiming to advance and consolidate a central position. The epigraph of this chapter reflects the rationale behind the allegory. While both thoughts come from distinct contexts, the ideas within both hint at the same end. In the words of Laclau, it is the post-foundational context that makes a ‘failed unicity’, or, according to the Zapatista vision, it is the possibility of multiple ‘worlds’ or ‘realities’. In both cases, the prospect of contingency affecting the social configurations grounds the argument.

The conclusions are presented in three sections. First, I will reflect on what is gained from the conceptual settings and the exploration of social objectivity. I also address the limitations of the analytical context. Afterwards, I discuss the aspect of hegemony with the universal and the particular debate projected in the scenario of a final foundation. I will then highlight all the elements that establish the intended conceptual *approximation* for the field of Peace and Conflict Research. The allegory of movement and spatiality is a good point to set forth the final comments of this dissertation.

9.1 Claiming the centre: three settings and one world

I start my concluding remarks by reflecting on how the analysis addressed the leading question about the interrelation of logics of difference and equivalence and the discursive configuration that came up in the conceptual settings. These remarks include all the positive aspects, gains and limitations of the analysis. The positive aspects come about with the focus and frame of each setting that addresses particular aspects that other analyses have not studied. In this case, I consider that there is also a small contribution to discourse theory's analytical concerns. Certainly, my work developed through the 'theory-driven' approach; thus, the focus is on the interrelation of the logics of difference and equivalence. The aspects of the interrelation that emerged are what can be considered as the gains of the analytical context.

In the first setting, the UN was considered as a hegemonic formation exemplifying what discourse theory considers as the logic of difference. Through the sections of this chapter, I noted how discourse and identity expanded together with the articulation of a wide set of elements. The articulation implied that the more social demands are included in the discourse of the formation, the more social groups are incorporated into the project. Following the metaphor of movement and spatiality, when the great majority of social demands and identities are incorporated, the hegemonic actor 'becomes the centre in itself'. In the particular case contextualised, the actor (UN) featured a central placement since its foundation. I do not argue that other hegemonic projects develop in the same way. For instance, a social group (with a single demand) can develop from a minority stance into a wider project that increases its presence until reaching a leading position.

In terms of the discursive configuration in this setting, I consider that one of the most relevant aspects is the ways legitimacy and the claims of authority were displayed and how these claims ground the overall account of social objectivity. The most notorious issue seen through the discursive frame was the dichotomies that characterised the possibilities of the hegemonic actor and the social space. In the case of the UN, the authoritative accounts were evident in the use of positive/negative dichotomies. Therefore, the legitimacy of the project lies in that the positive is inherent to the project while all the external is negative. This 'simplified' dual setting of possibilities includes the positive aspects (values, peace, union) that are regarded as the 'essence and foundation' of the hegemonic actor. In terms of discourse, the actor gets involved in all the issues or topics that happen in the social space. The actions to control or avoid any negative situations (war, division, inequalities) that affect the space and its elements (population) are always dependent on the guidance and intervention of this

actor. In the analysis, I highlighted how the role of the UN is presented as the agent that will deliver a solution for a wide range of topics. This intervention also involves actions of the identities included in the project. This is when the common identity is mobilised to simultaneously appeal to different levels of identification ('nations' or 'persons'). Thus, the discourse demands unity and identification with the project to find solutions. The commonality of the hegemonic quest was visually represented with the world surrounded by a multi-ethnic community or by national flags.

On the other hand, I consider that the conceptual gains in this setting are to show the paradoxes of hegemony and, in this case, to expose that it can be an internal feature in the hegemonic project for the situation that affects this status. In other words, without a clearly defined antagonist, the hegemonic actor should be able to fulfil all the goals and interests. The limitations, though, reflect the argument of post-foundational thinking and discourse theory on the contingency and incompleteness of any project and actor. In this setting, contingency is 'displaced' with necessity. At first glance, there is nothing to deconstruct because the account of social objectivity works based on the assumption of fullness. The threats are external and defined in abstraction. However, as in any account of social objectivity, the socio-political project has negative situations that reveal the inherent contradictions and limitations. The logic of difference, in this case, expands. However, as Laclau and Mouffe argue, there is also an increasing complexity in the field. In the discourse, this can be exemplified when referring to the negative situations that are considered as 'external' to the project. For instance, 'war' has represented a paradox to the UN, because it is one of the internal elements (mostly a member state) that, directly or indirectly, gets involved in armed conflicts. In addition, policies and actions are ambivalent in respect of those situations that affect the social field. War, hunger, social injustice and economic disparity (as negative situations) are addressed as priorities, but some of the structural causes of these issues are somehow concealed. This paradox exemplifies that the differences can be aligned temporarily, but any hegemonic project has fissures and limitations.

Concerning issues of identity, the actor studied has specific features that are important to address. I indicated in the analysis that there is a multifaceted identity that establishes links among all the actors at different levels but also that there are unsolved contradictions I explained these issues considering the binary of 'union and disunion' within the hegemonic project. Union represents the core of the project and the central foundation of the account of social objectivity. All the social and political aims and the values promoted depend on 'being united', while the opposite of this represents the negative state of being. The collective identity (member states, UN institutions and 'we the people') that the aims and values unite is differentiated by categorising social and

political agency. Any person within the 'we the people' embodies this 'social' element. This social layer appears connected because this way of identification avoids any political or ideological antagonism and stresses the universalistic scope of the project. In this layer, the hegemonic stance is based on the acceptance of the project's normative grounds. The stance is developed through the inclusion of all groups available in the social field. This aspect appears in some posters in which diversity is the main logic represented.

Here, it is important to understand how the common identity is constituted in the case of the hegemonic formation. I argued that this case has a definitive characteristic because there is no 'other' that constitutes 'us'. At this level, the person is exclusively seen as a 'social element', and any trace of antagonism is concealed. Naturally, as Laclau explains, there is not a clear-cut identity that remains only 'social'. Thus, it is necessary to consider the political dimension of social identities, and the situation becomes more problematic if one political situation (e.g. nationalism) appears in the scene. As I explained before, the paradox and limitations of the hegemonic project are embodied within the collective identity. This is when the union of the project is challenged, and the limitations of the hegemonic referent are exposed. This situation is fully related to the example of how political antagonism is concealed in the discourse of the hegemonic actor. The shortfall in my analysis is that I did not look further into the internal opposition within the UN. The focus was on the expansion of the hegemonic project. Nonetheless, the analysis hinted at the 'concealment of antagonism' as a hegemonic strategy.

Moving forward to the second setting, the interrelation of the logics of difference and equivalence is more notorious, and the contextualisation showed how the encounter implied the occupying of the hegemonic position. The allegory of movement takes two visions, one from the 'left' and one from the 'right', as well as their collision in the centre. While in the setting of hegemony, political ideology is concealed to foster the union; in the antagonist context, the exacerbation of ideology is precisely the logic that divides the social field. This is the point that makes the chains of equivalence find a negative point of convergence. The logic underpinning this context may appear as a simple dual opposition contesting for a dominant place. I consider, however, that by starting the analysis with the argument of the constitutive feature of negativity, a more complete picture emerges to understand the discursive configuration and issues of identity under this context. The analysis exposed, via deconstruction, the complex structure of representing something regarded as 'neutral'. In other words, it showed the way the discursive dynamics and formation of identity permanently works by assuming

a 'pure presence' through an unquestionably neutral and legitimate stance. This is, I consider, the relevant input that emerged in this setting.

According to the discursive perspective, the two antagonist elements negate what is not internal to them. This was illustrated in the visuals where the identity of both sides was presented. In these cases, the account of objectivity and collective identity of the 'other' is completely negated. This is the basic hierarchical disposition that grounds antagonism. As seen in the analysis, a logic of neutrality and legitimacy saturates both sides contending for the definitive fixation. This is where the interrelation of the logics is evident. It is the closed setting of 'all the positive' (inherent to us) versus 'all the negative' (inherent to them). I explained this negation by highlighting the aspects of the fixation of meaning as a political act and the emptiness of a signifier. In the discursive and visual representation of a central value and aim, such as peace, the self-assumption of being the 'true guarantor' of this notion exemplifies the dynamics previously mentioned. In the visuals presented, the intervention of assigning meaning was notorious when the dove was 'dressed or coloured' within a specific identity. Thus, this situation shows the attempts to appropriate a notion or symbol and decide that it is not possible to give another meaning to this notion. This is why I argued about the emptiness of peace and commented that in this setting, peace can also be regarded as a floating signifier.

The different visual representations of peace outlined those attempts to assign it as the 'definitive version'. Each antagonist side overflows peace in their efforts to fixate the meaning; thus, this exposes the emptiness argued by discourse theory. The analytical outcome in this setting of antagonism presented the importance of the borders to comprehend the discursive boundaries that political intervention has created. In terms of the exploration of discourse and identity, the context of antagonism analysed clarifies the 'practical' aspect of poststructural thinking that reveals the hierarchical binaries in the borders and the way in which discourse and identity are nested. By reading through a deconstructive frame, it was possible to follow how a signifier is used to 'order' the social field and to observe how collective identities are legitimised or not legitimised within that order. My last observation in the analytical chapter of antagonism included the question of what stands beyond antagonism. On the ontological level, antagonism was considered as the limit of the social. It was regarded as its constitutive feature, but, according to Laclau, it was re-conceptualised as a discursive possibility instead of being the limit of the social. In this work, the contextualisation of antagonism did not intend to offer a direct answer to this question, which is a limitation of my analysis. Still, the analysis exposed aspects in which antagonism is more visible (e.g. nationalism and political ideologies). As I noted in the previous chapters, the ongoing theorisation in

this regard is related to Laclau's concept of heterogeneity and Mouffe's work on agonistic politics. The transition of antagonism to other configurations is part of the current debates in peace and conflict research (Aggestam, Cristiano and Strömbom, 2015; Shinko, 2008), and the opportunity for conceptual development is open. Agonistic thinking may be a more fruitful path to walk because it considers more options of social configuration and avoids pre-conceived norms and roles within the social.

In the last setting, the contextualisation that I proposed for heterogeneity implied that the *movement* started from the margins demanding certain aspects that the political structure overlooked. The exploration of discourse and identity shed light on significant features concerning the interaction of the logics of difference and equivalence. This last aspect revealed specific links with the other two settings. In fact, one of the most relevant theoretical conclusions of this scenario is the specific interrelation of hegemony and antagonism at the same time. The presence of the heterogeneous element implied an immediate situation of antagonism. Nonetheless, this situation was completely focused on one entity (the government as a political structure). The first step of the actor dislocates the field by declaring war. In consequence, the social field was divided, and the equivalence was established. Afterwards, the situation evolved into different stages of negotiation, tension and rupture. I considered that a level of antagonism was active all of the time, but there were still other dynamics involved. In this sense, it is possible to discuss the "degrees of antagonism" (Thomassen, 2005: 290) that evolved in specific places of the social field.

To explain this, it is necessary to consider how the conflict developed in different stages. Since the beginning, the heterogeneous element challenged the majority of actors and institutions (e.g. the president and political parties), and antagonism was fully focused on these. From this strong degree of antagonism, there were moments (negotiation of new laws attending the social demands) in which the tension decreased. In addition, the political system did not consider the movement challenging the social field as a 'pure antagonist'. This case has a specific situation that can be referred to as a frozen conflict or 'sedimented antagonism'. The movement returned to its 'origin', though not in a disregarded condition if compared with the initial demands. The social and political demands that motivated the insurrection were partially fulfilled. I consider that in this setting of heterogeneity, the discursive configuration revealed the ways the logics of difference and equivalence overlap simultaneously but in specific ways. The account of social objectivity and identity touched the social and political spheres in particular ways. As I underlined before, while antagonism targeted the main political actors, there was a pre-condition to develop a counter-hegemonic stance. This

observation is acknowledged in the way the Zapatista movement appealed and mobilised a wide range of actors and groups mostly with a 'social' character. I take this mobilisation as a chain of difference that aims to expand their views and consolidate a hegemonic stance. Therefore, the mobilisation of identity through different social spaces is an exceptional feature of this case. In the analysis, I stated that the relation between the main actors takes place within a hegemonic/counter-hegemonic frame. This is mostly due to the fact that the political system and the movement challenging it claimed to be on the side of the sovereign of the field (namely, the Mexican people). The resulting configuration is that the equivalences were focused on specific actors while a point of hegemony, or difference, was directed to the social level. In terms of the formation of collective identities, there are similarities to the setting of hegemony because the logic of expansion makes all the differences relational under the same 'social identity'.

Concerning the analytical context, the most relevant feature of this scenario is that the account of social objectivity this actor presented includes a multilevel approach that also appeals to the world as a totality. The account of social objectivity included an all-encompassing majority of social identities, not only in the given social field (Mexico) but also in a wider reference (the world). There are two theoretical aspects that are important to note in this scenario. The first is related to the political dimension of social identities. The Zapatista discourse offered a clear example of the articulation of a common identity (beyond the national) by lining up all of those social groups that were mentioned in the discourse. This articulation shows the political aspect of the social identities discourse theory considers (Laclau, 1994). In the Zapatista Declarations analysed, a wide range of social groups were mobilised to develop a legitimate position, to increase the presence of the movement, and to establish a new frame of social and political organisation. The accounts of social objectivity and identity have all the potential elements that could develop a hegemonic stance. I acknowledged in the analysis that this stance would be based on multiplicity. In the case reviewed, this feature becomes the foundation that would transform the heterogeneous element into a position of hegemony.

The other aspect is the constitutive aspect of heterogeneity. I framed this actor as having the double feature of being internal to the social field and as representing the limit. Being internal means that it is part of the 'homogeneous' (Mexican people) and not necessarily antagonist, but it is clear that it created a dislocation of the field, which exposed the limits of the system. Therefore, I regarded it as a heterogeneous element. This aspect is noticed with the rejection of the political system and in the challenge to the existing institutions. The Zapatistas' social demands represented the failure and

limits of the system. The constitutive aspect is noticed because the actor enacting the demands was an internal element, and the limits of the system were noticed in the disregarded position and marginality of the social groups included in the Zapatista movement. The irruption of this movement indicated the groups belonging to society that were ignored and displaced to the 'internal borders' of the system. Even though this setting displayed interesting elements of the interrelation of the logics of difference and equivalence, this is by no means a conclusive understanding of how a heterogeneous element develops in the social field. For instance, I commented that the Zapatista movement does not necessarily represent an agonistic stance, even though there were some elements close to this stance. This inconclusive result in my analysis requires more conceptual development. This situation can represent part of the limitations of my analytical context in that by focusing on one aspect, I overlooked other issues.

9.2 The final foundation as the universal (but determined from the particular)

The scenario of a final foundation appears in practically all of the accounts of social objectivity analysed, and it becomes 'the place' where the interrelation of the logics of difference and equivalence can also be discussed. To be precise, the point I want to emphasise is to consider how hegemony, which is the central category running through the conceptual settings, relates to the possibility of a final foundation. I draw on some of the findings in my analysis and in the universal-particular paradox to develop the discussion. As Laclau states, "The relation between the universal and the particular is a hegemonic relation" (1996: 53).

The scenario of final foundation represents, in a discursive way, the culmination and fulfilment of the aims that underpin any account of objectivity. According to discourse theory, the foundational myths were accomplished and converted into a shared imaginary representing the universal. Considering my deconstructive frame, every piece for analysis presented, visual or written, includes a 'trace' of the possibility of fullness because in the articulation of the discourse, all elements are relational. Thus, their identity is dependent. Even in the pieces in which a dramatic situation (e.g. war or environmental concerns) is the main reference, the possibility of fullness is there. One of the analysis' conclusions is that this possibility is completely dependent on the notion of unity. This notion is the core foundation within the accounts of social objectivity reviewed. Therefore, discursively, all the actions and aims of the actors depend on 'unity' as a condition of possibility. It is not a revelation that any socio-political project will

include an aspirational dimension where all the goals, actions and efforts are finally awarded. Nevertheless, the analytical quest ahead is to see how the elements that give legitimacy to the project are presented in the discourse. The point from a post-foundational perspective is to trace the moment when the borders are established, and the discourse achieves acceptance and normalisation. This is the claim of the universal, but it is determined from the particular.

On one side stand the accounts of social objectivity that include the possibility of achieving a moment or situation where all the goals are fulfilled. This is the foundationalist view in which events follow a causal development that at some point reach the desired moment of realisation. On the other side, I worked with the conceptual arguments that consider the impossibility of a transcendental signified and the incompleteness and contingency of the elements within the social. This is the post-foundational perspective. The contradictory situation evolves in the context of failed unicity as Laclau mentions, where the universal/particular paradox is relevant. It is necessary to see the tension within this debate with the argument that universality is always a certain stand that cannot transcend its particularity. In terms of discourse theory, it is a hegemonic stand that is partially stabilised as universal.

In the cases presented, the elements of the universal are those foundations presented as goals (e.g. peace, unity, liberty) and that are used as nodal points articulating the discourse. The logic behind this discursive articulation is that the foundations will be fulfilled at some point. In my understanding, this fulfilment conveys the prospect of the *closure of politics*, or what Mouffe refers to as 'post-politics' (2005a). This closure is the setting of a final foundation of unity and totality. This type of foundation is the social imaginary of the universal, including all the possibilities of the particular. This is when the universal is meant to be *the (real) universal*, which represents the ultimate ground of the social.

The paradox that Laclau underlines in the universal/political debate can be seen in the possibility of the closure of politics that, paradoxically, is a political decision. Furthermore, the argument of post-foundationalism is evident in this debate exposing the scenario that the social cannot exist without the political. All these arguments are visible in the analysis through the poststructural political theorisation of discourse. In the accounts of social objectivity, it is possible to appreciate the 'representation of fullness' in particular ways. The critical point in this context is to interrogate how hegemony and the aspiration and prospect of fullness are constructed. In the three settings, the ways 'the particular' is presented as 'the universal' are clear. In the first setting, the universality of the values grounding the project develops the hegemonic stance. Unity is the bedrock that implies a collective convergence with the idea of 'one

community-one world', which is the prevalence of the logic of difference. In the other two settings, it was a combination of difference and equivalence. In the setting of antagonism, the ultimate intention was to prevent the particularities of the enemy from becoming the universal. Both sides claimed to be the legitimate reference to endow meaning to a shared value, such as peace. Finally, there is a socio-political movement that appeals to "[l]ocal and particular, reverberating in the echo of great distinction". As it reads in the epigraph of this chapter, this position on the universal includes the possibility of multiple worlds (except the neoliberal) and realities. In this case, the universal path of the Zapatistas' snails is a spiral trajectory to one centre among others.

In each of the settings, there are examples of the representation of the universal, and all featured similar symbolic elements. Visually, this was represented in the first scenario in "Towards a society of all ages",²²⁶ in the second scenario in the images "Peace! and friendship!"²²⁷, "Oppose hegemonism, uphold world peace"²²⁸, and in the Zapatistas' "A different world is possible".²²⁹ Intertextuality explains that in each of these images, the imaginary of the multi-ethnic community surrounding the world epitomised all the visions of social objectivity. The discursive frame reveals that even if these communities 'look the same' or seem alike, they are not. The *difference* can be noticed in the ontic level of organisation. The community appearing on the United Nations' side is reliant on an economic and governmental framework (neoliberalism) that the Zapatista movement categorically rejects. Although in the representation of the community the ideological allegiance is concealed, each one will identify itself with an aspect that will find resistance and rejection. As Laclau points out, "*The universal is an empty place, a void which can be filled only by the particular, but which, through its very emptiness, produces a series of crucial effects in the structuration/destructuration of social relations*" (2000: 58 emphasis in original).

My conclusion is that in the discursive and visual representation of the world, the idea of belonging to a collective whole is the most elaborated expression of the 'no political logos'. However, of ruling out the setting of unity and fulfilment, what remains is the encounter for the *political logos*. This is a decisive critical output that my analysis shows based on the poststructuralist theorisation of discourse. In the political logos, the representation of order is at stake. As considered by discourse theory, hegemony is that attempt to capture and represent the political logos in a particular way. Following the images previously mentioned, they envisage how an imaginary becomes the place where

²²⁶ See page 158.

²²⁷ See page 193.

²²⁸ See page 206.

²²⁹ See page 254.

the representation of the last stage or fulfilment of the project develops. The elements of the imaginary include the transcendental subject, the enunciation of the ‘universal we’ and even a temporal allusion (future world). The imaginary is the place where the collective experience (e.g. “we the peoples”, “brothers and sisters”) reaches the awaited fulfilment. This is what Laclau calls the logic of incarnation with the privileged subject that transcends the universal. For instance, I stated in the setting of hegemony that the collective identity now includes a call for “global citizens”. This is an example of the particular personification, or incarnation, of a transcendental subject that is presented as a universal reference. In the setting of antagonism, each side claimed to be the legitimate protector of world peace, while the world the Zapatistas envisioned comprises “the ones at the bottom”, with their multiple realities coexisting without hierarchisation. In each setting of the analysis, the logic of incarnation appears and complements the imaginary of fulfilling the goals and reaching a stage of fullness. In one way or another, this logic is inherent to any account of social objectivity, regardless of the configuration that takes place in the social field.

The representation of the imaginary in this way recreates what I mentioned about the paradox of the universal-particular. I contend that this paradox can be equated to the tension between the social and the political. The paradox is the tension between necessity and contingency. This framing is evident in those examples in which the ultimate social order is symbolised with the absence of the negative feature and by representing and claiming a value in its ultimate form (e.g. the ‘fullness of peace’). In this logocentric setting, the ultimate discursive manoeuvre is to represent the political logos as exactly the opposite.

Claiming the identity of being the representative of the universal is, once more, an example of the attempts to solve the tensions and paradoxes of grounding an account of social objectivity. This representation is presented by concealing the political aspect that implies this way of identification. The possibility of a post-political scenario is directly related to those attempts presenting a ‘neutral’ representation. On this issue, poststructuralism questions the assumption of a presence as neutral and legitimate. Poststructural thinking does not deny the importance of the universals but underlines the necessary emptiness of it (Laclau 1996, 2000), the risk of particularising it (Butler 1996, Laclau 1992) and the process of exclusion that it implies (Newman 2005, 2013).

9.3 On the conceptual approximation

My closing words should be understood within the logics that backed this work. In this last section, I shall make an appraisal of the different elements that make the three points of reference. I started the dissertation pointing out the tension between contingency and necessity. I had in mind the argument of the impossibility of grounding a definitive foundation or version of a signifier. Now I understand that when any discourse ‘proposes’ the closing definition of a given signifier, it is privileging the necessity of meaning and suspending contingency. This suspension is the particular attempt to achieve hegemony. And, this is what the conceptual approximation attempted to expose: Even though any account of social objectivity may appear as permanent and universal, it is a temporal and limited version that will be haunted by a further vision that will claim the same. This tension is the critical line that links the accounts of social objectivity in all of the pieces analysed. This is, in perspective, the first point of reference exposing how decisions are contingent.

The second point developed by arguing for the need to consider a specific conceptual approach in Peace and Conflict Research. This implied the dissertation’s objective to show the possibilities of using a poststructuralist political theorisation and analysis of discourse and identity. The way I proposed to advance a conceptual approximation and conduct an exploration of different accounts of social objectivity required a specific ‘structure’ for the contextualisation of concepts, cases and research material. Discourse theory’s conceptual edifice has many levels and units that involve a considerable level of abstraction. I pointed out the risks of proceeding in such an approach and the possible ‘rewards’ that the elements of this dissertation could bring. Nevertheless, the analysis with these discourse theory’s concepts involve a very deep understanding of the structuration of discourses and identities. Despite the differences among the settings and cases, the concepts and analytical reference provided an account of the subtleties and complexities in the articulation of discourses and the conformation of identity. In the contextualisation of the three concepts as settings, the settlement of meaning and the configurations of discourse and identity were visible from contrasting angles. This made it possible to appreciate the internal disposition of the elements that constitute discourse and identity. In this level of abstraction and analysis, it becomes relevant to question the claims of authority as well as the hierarchies and exclusions happening in the discourses that are presented to ‘make sense’ of social reality.

The three settings presented can be a reference to understand situations related to the construction of better configurations to diminish societal conflicts. A hegemonic formation can be applied to overcome a conflictual setting where certain forms of

identification block a consented resolution. This formation would be established with the incorporation of elements in a temporary context where antagonism is diminished and controlled. Following an element of heterogeneity may bring about those foundational contradictions and show other forms of organisation and identification. This may be the case of a movement starting from a disregarded position experiencing a transition that crosses antagonism and achieves a productive hegemonic stance. All the settings strongly emphasise the need to see conflict beyond an objectivist understanding of fully constituted identities and meanings.

Considering the plural form of 'ontology and peace' mirrors one of the post-foundational proposals of thinking beyond a monolithic or unitary ground. This is the feature of incompleteness and contingency that pervades identities and discourses. This is also the feature that I argue should be widely considered in Peace and Conflict Research. Under post-foundational thinking, the lines of discussion must consider the tension of necessity and contingency, as argued by Laclau and Mouffe. Therefore, the theoretical task ahead demands a more comprehensive analysis of what constitutes subjects and objects within the social and the discursive articulation behind any socio-political project promoting a vision of social objectivity. These conceptual references allow the questions of how foundational claims are put forward and how logocentrism is celebrated to remain open. One theoretical possibility to develop further is to understand the dynamics of hegemony, antagonism and heterogeneity in the processes of negotiation, mediation or reconciliation that are meant to solve conflicts and construct peace. Overall, the settings presented in this dissertation are a reminder that peace and conflict involve many configurations and political interventions.

On the 'practical issues', the poststructuralist discursive approach provided the context to work with all the conceptual and practical concerns that the analytical context required. This is the place of the third point of reference on the strategies to address the political dimension of the text and the visuals. As seen in the analytical task, by drawing on poststructural strategies, I developed an analytical context in which all the pieces for analysis make a 'gallery' or new analytical body. Thus, from the discursive perspective, two seemingly unrelated actors such as the United Nations and the Zapatista movement converge in the way their accounts of social objectivity trace an all-encompassing arrangement of identities and social demands. The multiplicity within these conceptual settings reflects the way this work emerged. I developed the idea of this work by looking posters of the United Nations with the representation of the 'dove of peace' while promoting a whole (hegemonic) vision of the world. Yet, in other posters, the dove was claimed and reclaimed. This contradiction mirrored the arguments concerning hegemony and antagonism, as explained by discourse theory. In both cases, the

discourses projected images of fullness and negation. Furthermore, an indigenous movement featured poetry, images, murals and the inclusion of multiple words that demanded peace and justice from a disregarded position.

In my analytical context, intertextuality and the intended level made the conjunction of posters, Declarations and meaningful references possible, while discursivity guided the way to deconstruct and read the meaning invested in these sources. The challenge was to find that 'hidden' connection among the pieces for analysis and to expose the wider connection in the discursive and theoretical dimensions. This situation shows how important the concept of textuality is in my work. This concept provides the opportunity to combine different types of research material and maintain an analytical focus at the same time. In the way I combined many conceptual elements, it was certainly possible to read 'inside-out' the accounts of social objectivity and visual representations. In any case, it involved the disposition of all of the conceptual elements, my concern with discursivity and the immediate and intended contexts that made a functional analytical frame of analysis. The third point implies considering textuality, intertextuality and the political intervention within.

Concerning the fixation of meaning, I view deconstruction as a form to address presence in the text. It involves reading the limits of foundational decisions because the limits are the place where differences are established and enacted. The decisions related to achieving any form of organisation (e.g. identity, community, etc.) necessarily exclude and include an element that, even if concealed or repressed, will be —present in its absence. To me, poststructuralist thinking goes beyond a theoretical and/or analytical perspective of the social. By taking the small details that are in the limits seriously, the composition of 'objectivity and subjectivity' looks fragmented and precarious. Yet, this offers a more comprehensive and detailed 'big picture' of those two issues. Reading (in) the limits requires an anti-essentialist understanding of the elements within the social. A deconstructive reading shows the hierarchical binaries in which discourse and identity are nested. After the analysis of the settings, I consider that the limit of the binaries is the place where the political is seen as constitutive of the social.

According to discourse theory, fixation of meaning necessarily involves the establishment of borders. Discourse theory's emphasis on the political dimension behind the fixation of meaning is a fundamental part of social and political analyses that tend to be downplayed by the perspectives that essentialise language and the rest of the elements within the social. This is the reason that I placed words and images at the core of my analysis. I explained that the settings worked as a contextual frame in which some social configurations can be appreciated by exploring the discursive dynamics and

formation of identities. The exploration was carried through all of the words and images that were mobilised, overlapped, shared and contested concurrently.

Thinking about limits and borders allows the critical inquiry to consider the normalisation or neutralisation of different interpretations. As the Derridean concepts exposed in the analysis, presence as representation conceals those manoeuvres that occur at the moment of decision. The images that I referred to as examples of imaginaries are the ones suggesting that the horizon of success is when politics are no longer required. This is when the battle for the logos seems to be over. Nevertheless, the conceptual task ahead is to think within the context of failed unicity and contingency and to not have totality as the horizon where the elements are essentialised and homogenised. This means being aware of the tension of contingency and necessity and not falling into the trap of ‘enlightening rationalities’, which tend to reproduce colonial forms of domination and to reinforce structural forms of violence. The ongoing rise of political movements based on —the negative essentialisation of the other— is a current phenomenon that can be addressed with the conceptual and analytical references presented in this work.

In the last instance, as a conclusion, I can say that the *exploration outlines an approximation*. For me, it has been a long discursive and visual walk in a gallery, during which I appreciated the pieces for analysis as tiles of a huge mosaic in which images and written sources found a context to show how they relate to each other. The complexities of achieving peace, fighting hunger and framing atomic energy with environmental balance found common points with satirical views of prominent historic world leaders or maps illustrating a divided world in red and blue. And yet, this contextualisation offered space for the Mayan snails, the rebel Zapatista women, the eloquent and proud poetry describing the Mayan and Tzotzil communities, and the ‘anti-neoliberal rebel dog’ urinating on capitalism.

In the various examples to which I refer, there are contingent identities that are related in more complex ways that it may seem at first glance. This is a reminder of what poststructural thinking offers as an analytical effort. The decision to ‘go’ to the margins to examine how the borders are made is not an easy one because the contradictions and paradoxes multiply endlessly. I think that this mosaic also reflects the need to think about the possibilities available in the many foundations and ontologies and in the setting of coexisting *peaces*. Conceptually, this is already a step beyond the traditional binaries and essentialism that characterise the ‘mainstream’ perspectives in the academy and in praxis. Peace and conflict convey simultaneous contradictions and paradoxes that are necessarily mediated within words and images.

At some point, we may hear someone asking, 'What is the real meaning of peace'? If someone asks me this question, my answer would be 'It is an empty signifier'. Not expecting a positive reaction to this answer, I would add that I have seen peace transforming from a bomb into a dove and that I have seen it under a red (communist) sky, embodying a military tank to denounce a totalitarian regime and wearing a Zapatista balaclava. I would also share that I have seen the identity of peace claimed and re-claimed. Thus, peace is all of the above and something else. Conceptually, the tension of necessity and contingency affect it. It is the most needed feature in the social field, but this will not make it immune to contingency or erase the trace of the political within it. It is necessary to ask this, but it is more important to recognise that many possibilities are involved in each answer.

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